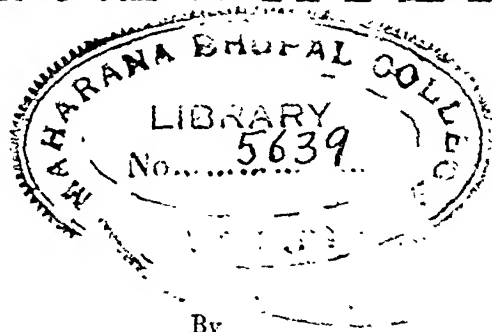


# AN EASTERN BACKWATER

# AN EASTERN BACKWATER



By

BOXWALLAH

"Nor set down aught in malice"

LONDON: ANDREW MELROSE, LTD

7 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C

## PREFACE

A SEA-CAPTAIN of my acquaintance, pestered during a voyage to India by an inquisitive lady passenger, finally lost his temper, when, in lat.  $12^{\circ} 30' N.$ , long.  $55^{\circ} 28' E.$ , she inquired, "Is it always rough here, Captain?"

"Good heavens, Madam!" he exclaimed, "do you think I live here?"

We live here. Have you ever, reader, reclining in a punt on any of the backwaters between Wallingford and Richmond, thought how dull it would be to spend even a week in the stagnant reach where you lay moored for a few short, happy hours? When fair visitors from the West, "doing" the East in a six months' tour, record their impressions of the bright days of a brief cold weather spent in this backwater of ours, and write charming booklets to show how happy is our lot in being privileged to pass the best years of our manhood in this Elysian land, we lay down their books with a sigh and the pregnant comment, "We live here!"

# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I   OUR MASTERS   .   .   .   .   .   .	13
II   THE QUEEN OF HEARTS AND THE KNAVE OF CLUBS   .   .   .   .   .   .	45
III   HONOURS AND MANNERS   .   .   .   .	59
IV   JUSTICE AND CORRUPTION   .   .   .   .	75
V   MISSIONS   .   .   .   .   .   .	97
VI   THE STEAMER-CAPTAIN.   .   .   .   .	119
VII   THE B.S.R..   .   .   .   .   .   .	149
VIII   SOME CIVILIANS AND OTHERS   .   .   .	171
IX   MY FRIEND THE EURASIAN   .   .   .   .	201
X   ON THE RIVER   .   .   .   .   .   .	221
XI   OUR VILLAGE   .   .   .   .   .   .	247
XII   SOCIETY IN THE BACKWATER   .   .   .	269
XIII   THE BACKWATER IN WAR   .   .   .   .	297



## OUR MASTERS

## CHAPTER I

### OUR MASTERS

“ . . the general quarrel which all sons of Adam maintain with their lot here below.”

—CARLYLE.

“ The little tin gods on the mountain side.”

—KIPLING.

WE are governed by “ the finest Civil Service in the world,” diluted with a sprinkling of “ uncovenanted ” and military men who enter by the backstairs. We know that our Civil Service is the finest in the world, because its members tell us so in our clubs ; and when they retire they become members of Parliament and preach the same gospel to the House of Commons. Is not the testimony of the inhabitants of the “ dear, damned, dirty city ” itself universally accepted as proof of the fact that the purest English in the world is spoken in Dublin ? And who should be better qualified than the members of the Service themselves to

recite its virtues? It follows as a natural corollary that the Civilian is the best man for any and every post under Government—provided the pay is adequate—and that he can have no more laudable or patriotic object than to consult the interests of the province, and incidentally his own, by pushing the claims of the Service. For every Civilian “seconded” for duty outside his proper sphere, the Commission, creates a vacancy and hastens the flow of promotion.

The way into the Civil Service is well known. To quote the words of a Civilian after dinner, “A man needs brains not merely to get into the Service, but to get on in it.”

As the speaker was at that time an ornament of the bench in the Backwater, he had presumably “got on in it,” and the inference was obvious.

The Judge was not singular in his views. Another Heaven-born, dining at Government House and desirous of impressing the lady he had taken in to dinner with a due sense of his importance and her own unworthiness of the privilege, crushed her with this epigrammatic utterance—

“Brains may be divided into two classes:

the administrative and the executive. We are the administrative class, the Navy the executive."

"But," replied the puzzled lady with an expiring effort to assert her individuality, "are there no other brains? Soldiers, barristers, writers, even professors and men of learning?"

The answer came with ponderous but ungrammatical brevity: "There are only Us, Us and the Navy."

The rest was silence.

*Pace* these learned gentlemen, if a man has the type of brains which fits him for success in a competitive examination he can get into the Service, and without additional qualifications he can go far in it by the mere thrust of the men behind him. It will do him no harm if he has a Scotch accent and resolutely keeps it to the fore, unlike the Southron who seeks always to conceal the locality from which he springs. And a taste for the national beverage will prove no obstacle to his success. It is possible indeed, though not easy, for a man to avoid promotion altogether by a steady neglect of his duties, and he may retire at the age of forty-eight on a pension of a thousand pounds per annum, even though his pay in India may

never have exceeded a thousand rupees a month, or eight hundred pounds a year.

By a clever fiction the Civilian contrives to draw considerably more than the pay of his grade. A simple arithmetical calculation shows that his "allowances" amount on the average to more than twenty per cent. of his already handsome pay, while the policeman draws on the average six per cent. of his pay in the form of officiating allowances, and no other department draws in the shape of allowances anything worth considering. There is no *a priori* reason why, when a man is diverted from the Commission to other employ, every man below him should gain a step in promotion; no reason why, if there must be vacancies, they should not be in the higher grades instead of in the lower. But contrary to all physical law, the flow of promotion is upwards, as if when a tablespoonful of water is taken out of a jug, the water should rise to the old level, and leave an empty space below. The Government of India is welcome to the suggestion that a vacancy should draw down the man above and not elevate the man below. Think of the economies which might be effected by such a plan, if only the Government were not composed of

Civilians with brass hats ! The dictum of one of them may appropriately be quoted : " The Government of India is the I.C.S., and the I.C.S. looks after its own."

The Service recognizes no equals and admits no superiors, and so fears no criticism. The consequence of this attitude is a cynicism which borders on shamelessness when any question of promotion or pay comes under discussion. Here is a concrete example. For a newly created judicial post there were two candidates. Acton, a distinguished barrister and author of several standard works on Indian Law, had been formerly a judge in the Calcutta High Court and for six years chief judicial officer at the head-quarters of the Backwater. Cobleigh had in twenty-seven years' service passed less than a year in judicial appointments, but he was a " Heaven-born " and the brother of a Bishop. To the amazement even of the dwellers in the Backwater, who were well acquainted with the power of the I.C.S., and in spite of their most vehement protests in the form of newspaper articles and letters and memorials from the Chamber of Commerce and like bodies, Cobleigh was appointed and Acton resigned. Cobleigh held the post for a couple of years,

then took his pension. Again the coveted post was filled by a member of the I.C.S., though the rule laid down for the selection of the Chief Judge was that the best man available, and preferably a barrister, should be chosen. Three years later the post again fell vacant, and again a Civilian was appointed, but this time practice and principle were reconciled by a formal though somewhat belated official notification that ordinarily the highest judicial appointment in the province should be filled by a Heaven-born and not by a barrister.

Unfortunately few judicial posts were till recent years so highly paid as administrative appointments, and the less efficient men have generally been drafted into the judicial service. The obvious defect of this system is that it postpones a very urgently needed reform, namely limitation of the right of appeal. The appellate court is not prepared to trust the lower court, and the lower court is less anxious to do essential justice than to deliver a neat, compact, water-tight judgment, which shall be impervious to the attacks of advocates and come safely through the ordeal of revision. *Fiat justitia ruat cælum* is not the motto of the Indian courts. "Hang justice, but for Heaven's

sake let us observe the proprieties," is the rule for the guidance of officials. Hence the Englishman who upsets the decree of a native subordinate magistrate, whom he knows to have taken bribes, runs the risk not merely of having his own orders reversed, but of being censured for indiscretion. The European police officer is instructed to treat the native magistrate with a respect he cannot possibly feel, and he would be the last to endorse without qualifications the late G. W. Steevens' summary view that England has given India peace and justice. Bribery is treated as an ineradicable and amiable weakness in the native character, though rightly regarded as a shade more immoral than murder in a European. The native litigant, however, is inclined to consider all judges venal, if he but knew the price. One retired native magistrate made for many years quite a comfortable addition to his pension out of his acquaintance with the Sessions judge of the division in which he resided. Whenever the judge came round on tour the ex-magistrate paid him a formal morning call, and was received privately, as befitted an old Government servant living in retirement. When he returned home he conferred with the litigants



in whose behalf he professed to have influenced the judge and received from them solid consideration for his pretended assistance. If the case was lost, so much the worse! the other side must have found means of exercising greater influence! What the judge, a fiery military officer in civil employ, said when he discovered how he had been made to subserve the old man's naughty schemes, cannot be set down here.

The Heaven-born attempts no concealment of his opinions concerning the necessity of closing the backdoors by which military officers and others who do not bear the guinea stamp of the "competition-wallah" contrive to enter the Commission. And when four out of eight senior appointments at one time were held by military officers or uncovenanted Civilians, his indignation passed the bounds of speech and he was compelled to vent his wrath by drafting memorials to the Secretary of State, demanding an increase of pay to compensate him for the injustice. It is bad enough that a man who merely volunteered for service at a time when the Backwater was engaged in guerilla warfare with the frontier tribes, and whose sole qualifications are that during three years of desperate fighting he proved himself a man, and during

twenty years of peace an administrator, should delay the promotion of a Heaven-born who was an infant in arms when the other was justifying his selection for appointment to the Commission. But when a man rejected for the I.C.S. enters the army as a University candidate, and thence makes his way *via* the Indian army and the Military Police into the ranks of the elect, the whole principle of competitive examination is in danger. When, *comble de malheur*, a wretch so devoid of the special type of intellect cultivated by examinees that the competition for entrance into Sandhurst is beyond his capacity and he has to be smuggled into the army through the Militia—when such an incapable wretch, emerging from obscurity after eight years' military training, is found in the Civil List, jostling recruits from the ancient Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Leeds, why then the sacred principle is virtually abandoned.

It is little mitigation of the Heaven-born's grievance that the men so selected for a share in the privileges which he has been taught to regard as his monopoly by right of competition do prove in the mass as efficient as the competition-wallah. For it is a sad blow to his belief that place and power are the perquisites

of an intellectual aristocracy, and that brains without manners are alone sufficient for success, when he finds his pedestal shared by a dapper young soldier who has had the skill or good fortune to please her ladyship.

"I shall miss the old man," said young Wilson of the 292nd Sikhs, speaking of an unpopular Governor on the eve of retirement.

"Well, he doesn't leave many friends behind him," replied his companion. "What have you to thank him for?"

"Why, he put me into the Military Police, though there were eighty applicants above me on the list; and when I was posted to a frontier station, he brought me down at my request to the Capital."

"Did you write to him, then?"

"No fear! I wrote to Her!"

He will go far. He is clearly a believer in the maxim, "Make your peace with the women and the men will make you L.G." That is the modern adaptation to the needs of Anglo-Indian society of "Manners makyth Man," a motto little known in the Backwater, which Winchester and New College have, luckily, not yet discovered. There is a more modern saying which has been adopted for use here, the motto

of the Hoggenheimer: "I'm not rude! I'm rich."

Though no less an authority than Sir Auckland Colvin once said that position in India is determined chiefly by pay, it is not the higher pay of the I.C.S. merely, but their efficiently organized trades-union which gives them their power. When Parker of the Staff Corps was compelled to take sick leave by the recrudescence of a wound received in a frontier war, he remained absent from duty so long that his name had been omitted two years from the Civil List before he was fit to return. The Government, rightly considering it unfair to penalize a man for sickness due to a wound received in his country's service, restored him to that position in the cadre of the Commission from which he had left. Unfortunately this not unduly generous concession did not commend itself to the approval of the Civilian element, which regarded a bare act of justice to the representative of a "brutal and licentious soldiery" as an invasion of their most cherished privileges. They summoned a meeting, framed resolutions, and circulated a combined protest for signature; and in deference to their clamour the Government compromised matters by appoint-

ing Parker supernumerary in his grade, so that no man's promotion should be delayed. Like the gentleman he was, Parker removed all cause of offence by dying barely three years later. He had, however, lived to see an increase of the military family pension fund charges, and a reduction of the rate of interest guaranteed to the Bengal uncovenanted family pension fund. These measures, it was currently reported, were necessary in order to provide for an increase of pay to the Commission of the Backwater.

In justice to the Civilian it should be recorded that once at least he supported a proposal made in the interest of the despised uncovenanted officers of the Commission. This was a scheme for sanctioning a higher pension to all uncovenanted men who retired after attaining a certain grade. It was received with the warmest approval by the I.C.S., who frankly avowed their hope that the senior uncovenanted men would be induced to retire at the earliest possible date and so accelerate promotion. The same desirable end may be achieved in other ways. One favourite method is to appoint young Civilians Heads of Departments outside the Commission, on the principle that these scions

of the aristocracy of intellect are, provided the pay is big enough, prepared, like the British Navy, to go anywhere and do anything. Thus a young I.C.S. man is capable, after eleven years' service, of filling the position of Postmaster-General, which his predecessor, a post office official, took thirty years to attain. Land Records, Agriculture, Customs, Education, Forests, Police, all these are departments of activity which success in a competitive examination fits a man to administer far better than years of work in the department itself. It is significant that the Political Department, which calls for tact, the gift of languages, administrative skill, and other qualities which are supposed to be the equipment of the Civilian in a special degree, is filled by uncovenanted men, the pay being only moderate. The general results of the system may be inferred for all departments from the report of Mr. T. Robertson on the Indian Railways in 1903. "This unsatisfactory situation is partly due to the fact that the Public Works Department is without an expert head, the Member of Council in charge of this portfolio being invariably a member of the I.C.S., without any previous training in railway working and management."

But, like many other excellent people who are objectionable in the lump, the individual Heaven-born is quite an amiable person when he has shed his milk-teeth. His estimate of his own importance in the cosmic scheme when he first joins is illustrated by the remark of young Walton, who joined the Service in 19— and was posted to Jhilpur for training. He drove round to the Commissioner's house in a *tikka-gharri*, and being ushered into the presence of the *burra-sahib*, at once blurted forth, "I thought it very curious that no one came to meet me at the railway station. I presume you had a wire from the Secretariat to say I was coming?"

To which the Commissioner briefly replied, "You will find the Dak bungalow in the second compound to the right as you drive out of my gate. Good-morning."

The men who are sent out under the regulations of 1892 after a full course at the Universities are, however, of a better stamp than those produced by the older rules. It was inevitable that a youth who went straight from a cramming establishment to the University, where he spent only two years in association almost solely with others of his own service, solving

in his spare time problems which have puzzled Indian administrators for generations, should tend to become a prig; and the deference paid to him, from the day he landed in India, by the natives anxious to propitiate one who might hereafter become a power in the land, did not tend to improve him. All that the more modern product requires to make him a real acquisition to any society is two years as a subaltern in a British regiment.

Occasional isolated attempts at his reformation are made by amateurs. Greenwood, Heaven-born, fresh from forensic triumphs in the Devorguilla Society at Balliol, where he had imbibed the orthodox belief that the Indian Police was corrupt, root and branch, thought it his duty to say so in the course of conversation at the East Devonshire Mess, where he was dining as a regimental guest. To him across the table spoke little Templeton of the Police, a slight blue-eyed boy, known as a capital *shikari* and a thorough sportsman: "You will exclude, of course, from your censures the gazetted European officers of the Police?"

"Not a bit of it; they are all tarred with the same brush!" replied Greenwood, and



concluded from Templeton's silence that he was crushed and the matter settled.

When the guests departed Templeton left a few minutes before the young Civilian, and waited for him near the entrance to the compound. As Greenwood came down the path, Templeton was surprised to see a brother officer in the Police, who had also been dining at the mess, appear from behind a bush and advance towards their common foe, obviously with the same purpose which was in Templeton's mind. The three men converged and Templeton was the first to speak.

"Now then, Greenwood, it was impossible for me to resent your reflections on the Service to which I am proud to belong while we were both guests of the mess, but now I insist on a withdrawal and an apology."

"Nonsense!" was the curt reply, "I adhere to every word I said."

"Very well then, nothing remains but to convince you of your error." And the policemen set to work with a will. The process of conviction was long and painful, for the Civilian was not lacking in pluck; and it was a very much bedraggled and limp piece of humanity that was finally led by his breathless

captors back to the ante-room of the mess, where, in the presence of their late hosts, the offended police officers received the apology which they demanded. To Greenwood's credit be it noted that the lesson was not lost on him, and nobody meeting him in later years would ever have accused him of discourtesy.

Every private in Napoleon's army carried a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack. Every Civilian carries in his suit case the ribbon of the Star of India and a draft for a lakh of rupees a year. And he knows it. When Sir Steuart Bayley unveiled the statue of Sir Ashley Eden in Calcutta, he described him in a flowery speech as the most enlightened and able administrator Bengal had ever seen. The speech was duly reported in the London newspapers, and a friend of Sir Ashley Eden's, meeting him at his club, playfully rallied him on the glowing eulogy passed upon his tenure of the Lieutenant-Governorship. "Is that all?" was the comment of the ex-Governor. "Why, I knew all that long ago. Can't he find something more original to say?" *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur* might truthfully be said to every Civilian. A proper sense of one's own

value is a desirable quality, but it inevitably invites criticism, and encourages its possessor in arbitrary courses. This the Backwater knows by bitter experience.

Once upon a time the Frogs of the Backwater, having been ruled for many long weary years by King Log, prayed the Gods of the Mountain-side, saying, "Give us a new king from amongst ourselves," and their prayer was granted by the intervention of that deity which gives the fool his desire. "Now at last," said the Frogs, "we shall come to our own. No longer will strangers be brought in from far countries to fill our best offices and draw fat pay. 'The Backwater for the Frogs' be our motto." And never a voice was raised to remind them of what happened to the Frogs in the fable who changed their King, and of the difference between Jack in office and Jack out.

"Ah!" said the new Governor, rubbing his hands and assuming the smile which the Backwater learned to know so well and to love so dearly, "I have studied this province for twenty years, and what it wants, in my opinion, is new blood."

The unspoken thought of his hearers must

have been almost audible. "A thousand pities we did not think of that before we thought of you."

The Governor was as good as his word. In eight months he had introduced three new men to high office in the Backwater, and had superseded officials who, like himself, had spent twenty years in the country and knew its needs. His theory that such procedure makes for efficiency will not bear close examination. It is a commonplace in India that senior men prefer to serve in a province they know. It follows that when an appointment is sent begging round India, it will not be acceptable to the best men, who confidently look for promotion in their own province, and the second, third, or fourth best men will be offered for the vacancy. That the second or third best man from another province, with no knowledge of the special conditions of work in his new post, can be better than the best man on the spot, with a detailed knowledge of those conditions, is a large assumption and one not borne out by facts. Incidentally the men who are superseded lose heart and their work unconsciously deteriorates.

"Within two years," said the Governor,

"I shall be the best hated man in the Province."

It would be quite unjust to say that his prophecy was fulfilled. Apart from his mistaken principles, his administration was efficient and his supervision extended to the smallest details. He avoided the not uncommon mistake of leaving too much to his secretaries. One Chief Secretary sometimes behaved towards his juniors in a manner which seemed to evince a *penchant*, worthy of an old-time pedagogue, for "larnin' them to be toads." Hobson, a military officer in civil employ, returned from furlough married, and was posted to Mutchelpore as Deputy-Commissioner. Wishing to learn whether it was advisable to furnish his house completely and settle down, he went to the Chief Secretary and inquired what were the intentions of the Government:

"Really, I cannot tell, Captain Hobson," said the Chief, "what the exigencies of the public service may require."

"May I see His Honour, sir?" asked Hobson.

"Certainly, certainly!" was the reply; "I will ask the private secretary to arrange for an interview."

Next day Hobson found himself in the presence of His Honour, bland and blue-eyed as usual,

and apparently quite ignorant of the intentions of his secretaries, to whom he left such arrangements. When Hobson had explained his difficulty, the Governor said, "I think you will be quite safe, Captain Hobson, in furnishing your house and making yourself comfortable in Mutchelpore. You are not likely to be moved for several months, and when you are moved it will probably be to Batakpore, a day's run up the river. Then you can put all your household gods on a flat and have it towed up to your new head-quarters."

Hobson, delighted with the news, returned to the Chief Secretary's office.

"Well, Captain Hobson, and what did His Honour tell you?"

Hobson explained, and the Chief, with his winning smile, purred in comment, "Ah! That sounds very nice, Captain Hobson, does it not? Good-morning!"

Like a prudent husband, Hobson described in detail the result of his morning's work to his wife, a capable, level-headed young lady, who somewhat damped his ardour by remarking, "On the whole, I think we will not furnish, but just live camp fashion for a while."

Whether her decision was an instance of

feminine intuition, or merely the conclusion of a train of reasoning based on the sinister ring of the Secretary's parting sentence, it was amply justified by the sequel. In ten days' time Hobson received the following telegram, signed by the Chief Secretary :

"James has started to relieve you, proceed to Purwanabad at once."

Purwanabad was distant a journey of ten days by river steamer, so Hobson put his few belongings on board as soon as his relief arrived, and in obedience to his orders reported himself without delay at his new head-quarters. His indignation at the unexpected derangement of his plans was still warm when he took over charge from his predecessor, to whom he complained bitterly of the treatment he had received.

"But surely you knew you were only temporarily appointed to Mutchelpore?" interjected the listener.

"Not I!" replied Hobson; "I was told I should probably remain there for some months at least, and when I was transferred, it would only be to Batakpore."

"How extraordinary! Look at this letter," said the other, and put into his hands a demi-

official note, signed by the Chief Secretary and dated some days prior to Hobson's interview with him, in which the following passage occurred :

"Hobson will relieve you in the course of the month."

Government House and a lakh of rupees per annum do not alone constitute happiness ; as one Governor found, who presided over the destinies of the Backwater during a troubled period of its history, and fulfilled the useful function of whipping-boy to the Government of India. During that period the policy of the Little Tin Gods was carried out by the Secretaries, in the teeth of vigorous opposition from an important section of the community, which found utterance in the *Daily Croak*. The sarcasms of the editor, a clever Irishman, seem to have pierced the official stoicism of the Governor, though he never winced. But Providence once, and once only, gave him an opportunity of reading the editor a lesson and the chance was seized. Comparatively late in his career the editor married a lady well known in society, and thus, as Bacon puts it, "had given hostages to Fortune." Not long afterwards it was the privilege of the people of Kama-



nago, the capital of the Backwater, to welcome the greatest of Indian Viceroys, and to lay before him their grievances and present petitions for relief. In his reply to the address of welcome, the Viceroy, waving aside with inimitable grace and skill their complaints, complimented them on their sleek, well-fed appearance. In commenting on this speech, the *Daily Croak* bluntly hinted that, while butter was undoubtedly a pleasant condiment, it was an unsatisfactory diet without bread to spread it on. The leading article was brought to the notice of the Viceroy, who inquired who was the author of it.

What discussions took place, what complaints were made, what measures were suggested, are of course mere matters of conjecture. It is unlikely that the reports and rumours circulated during the next few days in Kamanago fell short of the truth. But the fact on which all were agreed was that the staff of the offending newspaper had received no invitations to the festivities inseparable from a Viceregal visit.

When the cards for the State functions and private parties were issued, and Mrs. Editor received none, report says that enquiries were made whether her invitations had miscarried or her name inadvertently been omitted. The

reply was to the effect that her name had been omitted, but not inadvertently.

This somewhat improbable story has the merit of explaining the restraint which was at once put upon the caustic wit of the *Daily Croak*. Perhaps Mrs. Editor took thereafter a real and practical interest in the paper's policy, for its tone was greatly modified after this event. When, a few years later, the new Governor was seen piloting that lady's graceful form through the mazes of the waltz at a Government House ball, the onlookers said, "Ah! That's tact!" And indeed this tactful Governor enjoyed during his tenure of office the *Daily Croak's* whole-hearted support.

The retort obvious, known east of Suez more generally as "the cheap score," has a temptation for most men, great or small. The prudent man and the generous man rise superior to the temptation, but Viceroys, being mortal, do not invariably evince the qualities of prudence and generosity. During his visit to the Backwater, our Viceroy arranged to shoot duck one morning on a famous *jhil*, accompanied by Carew-Plumer, the Commissioner of the Division in which the *jhil* was situated. Unaware that the Vicereine was to be of the

party, or possibly indifferent to the fact, for he was a man of breezy manners with a mind above trifles, Plumer appeared at *chota hazri* in the Viceroy's tent, arrayed in a pair of old Chinese trousers, eminently suitable for mud-larking, but hardly in keeping with the presence of ladies, except perhaps at a Highland ball. Her ladyship surveyed his costume with a disapproving eye, and coldly remarking, "I see I was not expected to *chota hazri*," left the tent.

Arrived at the lake, the Viceroy climbed into the *machan* prepared for him, and insisted on taking up with him a favourite bearer of substantial bulk, with the consequence that the structure, built to hold one man, collapsed and dropped His Excellency into three feet of water and mud. The irrepressible Plumer, at breakfast, leaned forward and called down the table to young Perry, the Assistant-Commissioner responsible for the erection of the *machan*, "I say, Perry! You'll be reduced to the fourth grade over this morning's work."

It was difficult to snub Plumer, but the Viceroyal party did their best during the remainder of their stay in his Division, by addressing him always as "Mr. Plumber."

His energy as a district officer earned for Carew-Plumer in his younger days the sobriquet of "The Tiger," by which name he was generally known to the natives and of which he was inordinately proud. For amongst natives, as amongst schoolboys, the bestowal of a nickname implies some degree of affection. It is to be feared that in these later days, when the district officer's time is largely occupied in the compilation of statistics about the work which he ought to be personally supervising, the custom is dying out. Another officer of the old school, Colonel Martell, was known for half his service as the "Fishery Commissioner," a title which he earned in the course of an investigation into the Government fisheries, whereby he was brought into close contact with the natives, whose respect and affection he quickly won by his generous dealing and sympathetic hearing of their claims.

Martell affected a total disregard for fashion or propriety in dress—an uncommon trait in a military officer. His usual attire consisted of a pair of old flannel trousers, with the legs thrust into a pair of high shooting-boots, a coat and waistcoat of the red striped *jharon* cloth, used mostly for dusters, and a cotton shirt with

a collar but no tie; the whole being crowned with a two guinea Panama hat, as if to prove to critics that his incongruous raiment indicated a contempt for convention and not a mean or frugal mind. His sole affectation was a thorough acquaintance with every village and every villager of any importance in his district.

One afternoon, while he was shooting snipe with a few companions, he wandered off alone, unnoticed by the rest of the party, who at dusk returned without him to Mutchelpore. Martell, in the meantime, overtaken by darkness in the jungle, had turned into the nearest village, obtained food and a bed from the village headman, and made himself comfortable for the night. When he failed to return home at nightfall, the police were called out and search-parties organized, who beat the jungle all night in vain. Early next morning Martell walked quietly into the club, where the few district officials were discussing with the greatest agitation and concern his probable fate. To their expressions of relief at his re-appearance, and their accounts of their anxiety and of the measures they had taken to discover his whereabouts, he replied with characteristic brevity and force and left the club in high dudgeon.

It was some days before his natural amiability could overcome the resentment he felt at the insult offered to him by the supposition that he could be lost or come to any harm in his own district. Peace be to his ashes! He died, like Carew-Plumer, a victim to his own energy and his inability to recognize when his force was exhausted and rest was needed. It was a curious coincidence that death carried off both men in the course of one month.

Placide . . . quiescant  
terraque securis sit super ossa levis.

THE QUEEN OF HEARTS AND THE  
KNAVE OF CLUBS

## CHAPTER II

# THE QUEEN OF HEARTS AND THE KNAVE OF CLUBS

“TI. Quand on y parlait titre, étiquette, Gotha,  
Mon cher, pour vous répondre il n’y avait personne !  
“FL. Il n’y avait donc pas le général Cambronne ?”  
—ROSTAND, *L’Aiglon* iv. 14.

THE station club being usually a mixed club, the first of the “Three P’s” is a topic not always available for general conversation. Then for “Polls” we may read “Precedence,” usually mis-pronounced as if it were a legal term. India is the happy hunting ground of the middle classes, who at home are not greatly troubled with questions of social standing, and the novelty of finding oneself assigned to a definite place in the social scale, determined by rank, grade, length of service or pay, has an intoxicating effect on weak heads. The Order of the Warrant, as the table is called, was obviously designed for official functions



only, but these are few and far between, especially in mofussil stations, and it seems to many people a pity that so elegant and elaborate a scheme should for long periods fall into desuetude. Hence certain ladies are found who insist that, at any and every dinner-party to which they are invited, the intricacies of the problem of seniority shall be worked out to their satisfaction, and woe betide the young hostess or unlucky bachelor host who is guilty of the slightest slip.

The husband of such a lady occasionally finds himself in a difficult position. At the head-quarters of the district of Muggerpore was stationed a native infantry regiment, commanded by Tranby, a full Colonel, married to a lady who was a stickler for her social privileges. The Deputy-Commissioner was Crosby, a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Indian army in civil employ. The Commissioner of the Division, visiting the station in the ordinary course, was invited to dine with the Deputy-Commissioner, to meet the station officials and the officer commanding the regiment. Before he replied to the invitation, Tranby, meeting Crosby at the club, inquired, "By the way, Crosby, whom will the Commissioner take in to dinner on the tenth?"

"My wife, I suppose," said Crosby, "since she is the senior lady on the Civil side."

"Then I'm afraid we shall have to decline your invitation," replied the Colonel.

Tactful hostesses evade the difficulty at ordinary social dinners, by making the men draw lots for partners, alleging that, since there are never enough ladies to go round, it is only fair that the junior men should occasionally have the chance of taking a lady in to dinner. This arrangement is eminently satisfactory to the men, for it possesses the charm which the masculine mind finds in a mere gamble—whether it be poker or racing spiders from the centre to the rim of hot plates—and chance sometimes allots to the senior man the youngest or most fascinating lady present, instead of the "mutton dressed as lamb" that usually falls to his share. It frequently leads also to a little innocent swindle in the drawing-room, when some of the guests are desirous of securing particular partners.

It is quite in keeping with the spirit and tradition of the Backwater that there should be an element of certainty in its gambles. The local Derby is never fraught with the glorious risk that attends the Epsom meeting. A select

coterie is always gifted with enough prophetic power to divine the winner, and by purchasing the whole or a half share in one sweepstake ticket from the lucky gambler who has drawn it, they secure a handsome profit. On one occasion the winning ticket was bought in from a *gharri-wallah*, for less than a quarter of the stake. That is equivalent to accepting the odds of three to one. On the course the bookmakers asked for odds of five to two. Another year a crafty native who drew the probable winner thought to possess himself of the whole prize in the sweep by disappearing from his accustomed haunts until the race was over. A hint conveyed to his relatives that it would be advisable for him to return to his sorrowing friends before the race meeting unless he wished to see the horse named on his ticket amongst the "Latest Scratchings," had the desired effect. On his return he was without further difficulty persuaded to sell a half-share in the ticket for quite a moderate sum.

But racing in the Backwater is an unsavoury topic.

"The ways of a man with a maid be strange, but simple  
and tame

To the ways of a man with a horse, when selling or racing  
that same."

was written of India generally, and it applies to the Backwater in particular. There is cleaner gambling in the Province, which was for many years, when it was young, noted as a haunt of poker-players. Now it is middle-aged and recounts reflectively the follies of its early years, with that curious mixture of shame, pride and regret, which is characteristic of middle age dwelling upon the sins committed and omitted in turbulent youth.

Most of the great poker-players are now with the "departed," who foregather in a certain club in St. James's, to eat curry for lunch and growl about the exiguity of their pensions. Greatest amongst these were Colonel Isaac Plover, *bon viveur* and sportsman, a warm-hearted man with an occasionally peppery temper; Oldacre, an Epicurean with stoical self-control, who reduced comfort to a science; and Antonio, a generous, humorous Italian, married to a native wife. His motto in every conjuncture was, "Why worry?" or, as he himself phrased it, "Vot is ze use to bozzer?" And his crowning illustration of the universal applicability of his principle was an incident in his domestic relations which, unfortunately, cannot be narrated here. The club rocked with

inextinguishable laughter when he told the story in his own inimitable manner.

A run of bad luck, acting on the Colonel's naturally quick temper, combined with a mischievous impulse which Antonio somewhat perversely obeyed, once caused a "breeze" between the two friends. Antonio, seeing that the Colonel's losses had somewhat ruffled him, and knowing that he was leaving the station the following day, reminded him that it would be advisable to settle his card debts, according to rule, before he went away. Discussing the incident afterwards, the Colonel described Antonio as "a damned Jew," and the description in due course reached Antonio's ears. The good-natured Italian merely smiled and waited his opportunity. At their next meeting, some months later, he greeted the Colonel, who had quite forgotten the incident, in his usual hearty fashion.

"Good evening, Colonel! Good evening! Yes, you are quite right! Antonio is a good old Hebrew name, and Isaac is a fine old British name neither!"

Poker seems, curiously enough, to have less noxious effects on the character than many other forms of gambling. Horse-racing in par-

ticular produces a moral warp, a secretiveness and duplicity, and a fondness for devious methods in its devotees. Both Antonio and Plover are known to have forgiven heavy gambling debts to youngsters who had plunged rashly in order to recoup their losses, exacting from them a promise that they would thenceforward not touch a card so long as they remained in the country. On the other hand, the character of Spades, another poker-player, but of inferior calibre, never exhibited any trace of similar generosity. A comparison of his play with the play of Antonio and Oldacre recalls the famous comparison between Sir Charles Russell and Sir Edward Clarke, both of them great exponents of whist. "The difference between them," said a player who knew both, "is that Clarke plays like a gentleman."

Oldacre and Spades had one point in common: both were fond of good living; but, whereas Spades was a gourmand, Oldacre was, up to middle age, an epicure. He exercised for many years strict moderation in eating and drinking and took plenty of hard exercise in order to keep "fit," so that he could enjoy to the utmost, and without injury to his health, the best living the country afforded.

broken only by the rustling of the papers. Finally Cliff turned to the man on his left and said—

“The club seems empty to-night.”

“Yes,” replied the person addressed, turning upon him a smooth, moon-like face, with large eyes behind great round goggles, “there’s some show on at the theatre and everybody’s gone there.”

“Ah! That’s it? I was told I should get a game of cards here. I suppose there’s no chance of a four for whist?”

“Not the slightest, I fear. Jones, here, does not play cards at all, do you, Jones?” Jones shook his head.

“That’s bad! Do you play poker or piquet?”

“Well, I have played poker. But cut-throat poker’s rather a hot game, isn’t it?”

“It’s better than doing nothing,” urged Cliff, “and it’s all right if you have a time limit.”

“Very well,” replied the innocent-looking victim of the stranger’s guile, “we’ll play till twelve.”

Next morning, as Cliff was sipping his tea in his bedroom, Jackson came in.

“Well, how did you get on at the club last night? Did you get a game of any kind?”

"I did indeed!" groaned Cliff. "Look at this!" and he pushed across to Jackson a cheque he had just signed. "The result of a couple of hours cut-throat poker with a shark wearing the face of a village innocent!"

Jackson took the cheque and read aloud—

"Pay to A. Oldacre, Esq., or Order, the sum of rupees eight hundred only," then collapsed into a chair, shaking with laughter. "Bad luck! I ought to have warned you. You struck the warmest poker-player in the warmest corner of this little Empire!"

Cliff was reputed to be the best piquet-player in India, and he spent much time during the next week in a vain endeavour to lure Oldacre into a game. Unluckily for him Oldacre was better informed with regard to his skill at piquet than he had been in respect of Oldacre's capabilities at poker.

The introduction of bridge, which has for ladies a fascination never exercised by whist, produced a great increase in those petty squabbles which are encouraged by the domestic atmosphere of a mixed club, and added to the troubles of club secretaries. The female character is somewhat deficient in those minor qualities which enable most men to bear, at



any rate with outward equanimity, a run of bad luck. A woman does not conceal her resentment and shows it in various odd ways. At the Kamanago Gymkhana Club, where a separate bridge room was set apart for ladies, the losers frequently protested against the scores entered in the bridge-book and refused to pay their debts. Eventually the secretary was compelled to decline any responsibility for ladies' bridge, and removed the score-book, leaving the players to pay cash. One lady would relieve her feelings after losing a rubber by saying as she dealt each card to her opponents, "You cat! You cat! You cat!"

## HONOURS AND MANNERS

## CHAPTER III

### HONOURS AND MANNERS

*Se non é vero, é ben trovato.*

**B**EFORE the institution of the Order of the Kaiser-i-Hind, before the advent to power of a Government which, according to its opponents, distributed honours regardless of merit, before Coronation medals swarmed in India like a flight of locusts, or, to vary the simile, fell like rain alike upon the just and the unjust, decorations had a certain significance, and the ambitious considered them not an unworthy object of effort. The Star of India is regarded as the most distinguished Order in the Indian Empire, and, as might be expected, is ordinarily reserved for members of the I.C.S. Any uncovenanted officer who obtains admission to the Order may safely be assumed to have rendered exceptionally valuable

service. Instances can be recalled of Heaven-borns whose attainment of the coveted Star was not the reward of very arduous labour. The Backwater is a province which enjoys immunity from famine and is not organized for famine operations. Occasional local scarcity occurs in consequence of an unfavourable monsoon, but this generally rights itself without official interference. Once, however, the Government, alarmed by reports of such local scarcity, proclaimed a famine, and put in hand certain public works which were urgently necessary, amongst them an important railway extension. So little real distress had been caused amongst the villagers by the "famine" that the famine scale of pay did not attract labour to the work and the story went that these were manned by relays of villagers, forced by the local village headman to undertake the *corvée*, or by coolies paid at twice the official rate for famine works. But the end no doubt justified the means, for the Commissioner received a Star.

The Order of the Indian Empire is less exclusive and naturally less appreciated; though its value should be far higher than it actually is, for the lists of the Order include men whose services have been more distinguished than

those of many members of the senior Order. But the decoration is often conferred for reasons which tend to cheapen it. A senior officer of police received it after twenty-five years' service as a hint to retire; but like the aged minister whose congregation, in their joy at learning his intention to resign, presented him with a glowing testimonial expressing their gratitude for his long and devoted ministrations, the gallant officer was unable to tear himself away from the province that so keenly appreciated his worth, and he blocked promotion for another ten years.

The most injudicious award of an honourable distinction was its bestowal upon a native broker, whose knowledge of English had caused him to be selected as interpreter to the Viceroy during a short tour in the interior of the Province. That was his unique service. This man disgraced himself some years later by his contradictory statements in a *cause célèbre* and was sharply castigated by the Chief Judge. In the meantime he had been chosen to represent the Province at the Diamond Jubilee, and by skilful wire-pulling afterwards got himself presented at the Court of St. James's, which apparently neglects to inform itself of the

antecedents of native gentlemen with the same scrupulous care it exercises in dealing with Englishmen. It is safe to say that many Europeans have been admitted in recent years to the Companionship of the Indian Empire who would have refused the distinction if they dared. It would be unsafe, however, to argue from the use of the word "distinctions" in official publications, in lieu of the ordinary term "honours," or from the contraction of "Honourable" as an official title to "Hon'ble," that any spirit of levity is manifested in the selection of names for the Honours List. Men who, in censuring a subordinate, are accustomed to sign themselves "Your most obedient servant," do not need the remindr conveyed by Rowland Hill to his recalcitrant committee, that the literal meaning of a phrase is not to be unduly stressed.

The non-official community sets more store by decorations and titles than do officials, and its taste for these gewgaws is gratified on grounds which, without an intimate knowledge of subterranean history, it is hard to discover or even conjecture. A very prosperous commercial company in Kamanago has developed the mineral wealth of the Province with all the resources

of modern science, and by the most modern methods of business, to the great profit of the proprietors. The motto of the Backwater Mineral Company is *Recte si possis*, and the most popular song after a directors' dinner is a ditty from an old comic opera, "Where'er a Scotchman roams for the benefit of ithers." As a token of Government's appreciation of the Company's public services in outmanœuvring foreign rivals the managing-director received the distinction of knighthood. The Cabinet on whose advice His Imperial Majesty acted at that time in distributing distinctions seemed to indulge a wayward fancy in the selection of worthy recipients of imperial favour. For Sir Stephen Kirby's name appeared in the same list with the name of a gentleman whose previous history was comprised in the statement that he was a fishmonger of Grimsby and a prominent Nonconformist. Sir Charles also was a Nonconformist, but unobtrusively so, though he flaunted a pronounced Presbyterian accent.

Commercial morality in the Backwater is not excessively high, although operations are as a rule carried out on the scale which differentiates a financial enterprise from robbery without violence. But sometimes even big

firms are credited by popular report with practices which smack of Fagin and his school. One firm is said to have effected during a long series of years considerable economies in the matter of import duties by the following shrewd device. They imported steel trunks of different sizes, packed one within the other, the innermost one being filled with silk goods. Duty was paid on the outer trunk only. If such stories are to be believed and are not merely the inventions of less successful rivals, they explain the boast attributed to another house that they had "no use for gentlemen" in their employ. Most firms, however, employ many public-school and University men who could not be expected to stoop to petty meanness. But they are expected to carry out the details of the operations planned and outlined by their employers.

A magnificent scheme is said to have been conceived by a foreign lumber company, which was restricted in its working of the leased forests by the rules of the Indian Forest Department and supervised by Forest Officers. Trees which may be cut are marked by the Forest Officer and girdled; that is to say, a deep groove is cut in the tree near the base so that it dies



and is ready for felling in two years. Teak not so girdled before it is cut is called "green teak" and has for certain purposes a special value. An assistant in the service of the lumber company observed that, having once girdled the trees, the Forest Officers did not further supervise operations. Who would be the wiser if, taking advantage of this trustfulness, he directed the company's wood-cutters to fell large quantities of ungirdled trees? These, being heavier than water, might be made up into rafts with the lighter, because seasoned, girdled logs, and floated down to the dépôt. This procedure, it is confidently stated, was adopted and continued for several years before the Government discovered what was going on; when the Company cheerfully paid a fine of £20,000 and, disowning their assistant, sent him home, where he lived comfortably in retirement on the pension provided by their gratitude.

The reader will now be prepared to swallow the yarn that when a certain notorious criminal was released from gaol on the expiration of a long sentence for manslaughter, he was met by the local representatives of three timber-firms, who outbid each other for his services, because he was the most skilful artist in the country

at caulking worm-holes and other flaws in wood, so as to make a rotten log appear sound.

Still these are only stories culled at random from a mass of floating tradition, and one would not be justified thereby in passing on the morality of the commercial class in the Backwater so severe a condemnation as would seem to be implied in the verdict of a jury empanelled from that class to try a Government servant on a charge of criminal breach of trust.

The evidence of misappropriation and misapplication of Government money was strong, and the judge in his summing up made it quite clear that a conviction should follow. The accused had put forward an ingenious defence, based on the very complicated accounts which were before the Court, and pleaded good faith and honest purpose in his dealings. The judge, in the course of his speech, made an ironical reference to this defence, saying, "If you, gentlemen of the jury, as men of business, believe that, in similar circumstances, you yourselves might have acted in a similar manner to the accused, you will give him the benefit of the doubt."

After five minutes' deliberation the jury

unanimously acquitted the prisoner, apparently quite unconscious that their decision might be construed into an admission, the mere suggestion of which, on the lips of others, would have amounted to slander. The judge was so taken aback by the verdict that he rose hurriedly and left the Court without discharging the prisoner, and a messenger was sent to the judge's private room, whence he emerged a few minutes later bearing a written order of discharge. The jurymen employed the interval in congratulating the prisoner and his counsel with great warmth and much hand-shaking. The consternation of the judge was reflected in the minds of Anglo-Indian society, and there were grave searchings of heart amongst those who had business contracts with the men who constituted the jury, and amongst the principals of the firms they represented.

This unexpected issue was due, no doubt, in part to the irritation produced in Anglo-Indian minds by executive action in connection with the proceedings of the courts. Resentment was so intense that for a time it would have been impossible to secure the conviction of a European by a European jury on any grave charge where a native was the accuser,

The consequences of attempts by a conscientious Viceroy or Governor to force the conviction of a European on weak evidence are not less serious than the consequences of wrongful acquittals of Europeans. In either event the respect of the native for the European is lessened and British prestige is lowered.

It may here be remarked that many discussions on prestige would be avoided or rapidly concluded if either of the disputants could quote the definition of the word from any good French dictionary. The diminution of native respect is the constant complaint of certain Anglo-Indians, especially of the commercial class. "The native grows every day more insolent: he has lost his old respect for the white man." The cause usually assigned is the growth of education, and the logical remedy is to stop the spread of education and insist that the native shall remain a coolie and grovel before the white man. To the assertion that the native is not so respectful as formerly, those who have not merely observed his manners in a big seaport town, but have also read his history in contemporary records, may reply in the words of Burnand, editor of *Punch*, to whom Gilbert complained that *Punch* was

nothing like so good as it used to be: "No, it never was!"

Admitting for argument's sake that the native has lost respect for the European as such, to connect this loss with the spread of education is to follow the example of those who ascribe the increase of cancer to the increased consumption of tomatoes. As for the proposed remedy, it does not go far enough. The suggestion should be adopted of a Commissioner who, after twenty-five years' experience of the Province, was being favoured with the views of a young mill-assistant, who had not been in the country twenty-five months: "I quite agree with you," he said, "but why not adopt a policy of 'Thorough'? We should put out the eyes of all the villagers, leaving a one-eyed man in each village to lead the rest out to work in the fields at sunrise, and to lead them down to water in the evening."

The men who chiefly complain of lack of courtesy from Indians fail to perceive that they themselves are the chief cause of any decline of British prestige. Time was when the native saw one European where now he sees fifty; when the British official or merchant, if not chosen from the nobility, at least belonged to

a class which accepted *noblesse oblige* as an axiom, interpreting *noblesse* as British birth; when the Englishman was still a conqueror with the laurels on his brow scarcely faded. "But Times are altered, Trade's unfeeling train" is largely recruited from non-British races which have proved their incapacity for governing the Asiatic and the African, and from a class of Britons who attempt to exact from the native a show of respect they have never received at home, and to extort by bullying a deference which is not yielded to their superiority of character.

The inferior Eurasian, with many of the faults and few of the virtues of both the races from which he derives, complicates the situation by claiming the consideration due to a European and by usurping the title Anglo-Indian; forgetting that whatever evil connotation belongs to the name Eurasian must inevitably attach to his new name when once it wins general acceptance. The shop-keeper has succeeded to the merchant prince, and the native trader, to whom dealings with the European merchant were once allowed almost as a favour, is now canvassed by the drummers of rival firms. Keen competition has undermined

honesty, and the native has ceased either to feel respect for the white trader, whose craft and sinuosities are comparable with his own, or to show deference to men who come touting for custom, and permit any breach whatsoever of native etiquette in matters of language and dress, "So long," to quote the words of a merchant, "as the man brings an order with cash in his hands."

The records of the Backwater down to the time of the British annexation show that the native has merely discarded the outward servile display of a reverence which he never felt, but considered it politic to affect. The strict enforcement of legal equality between native and European has removed the former's fear, and he no longer cringes to the white man indiscriminately. He has all his old respect for constituted authority, and a keener perception of character than is usual in white men. The European who deserves respect will find little ground for complaints of discourtesy, whether he be an official or a private individual. But he will see no mark of real respect in the cringing servility with which the native of the Backwater was accustomed to approach the petty officials of his own race, and which

is even more degrading to the European who receives than to the native who offers it. It is exactly this servile attitude which the grumbler demands and which it is the natural tendency of education to abolish.



## JUSTICE AND CORRUPTION

## CHAPTER IV

# JUSTICE AND CORRUPTION

"I cannot justify whom the law condemns."

—SHAKESPEARE.

"Every man has his price."

—WALPOLE.

THE late G. W. Steevens in his book, *In India*, an impromptu work which displayed a wonderful grasp of the essential difficulties of many Indian problems, summed up the position in these words: "Justice India can do without: for Peace she does not thank us." But by justice he meant legal decisions. Without this reservation his dictum is untrue. Essential justice was done in a far larger number of cases under the old *régime* when the Deputy-Commissioner was practically supreme in his district and the right of appeal was limited. Improved communications, the extension of the telegraph, and a better postal service, have brought with them an increase in the power of appeal as part of the natural tendency towards centralization, and nothing that has been done

## An Eastern Backwater

on the recommendation of the Decentralization Commission has materially altered the system. The district official who is in daily contact with the native is the best judge of the value of evidence given in his own court, and he is not likely to convict unless the evidence amounts to absolute proof. But he is generally unable to spare time from his multifarious duties to write those beautiful water-tight judgments which are the delight of the legal mind. The convicted prisoner, if he has money and the case is appealable, enters an appeal as a matter of course, and a European barrister is employed, who brings his highly trained faculties to bear on the task of discovering some flaw in procedure on which the judgment may be reversed. After all a judge of appeal must do something to justify his existence.

The effect on the administration of justice in the district is lamentable. The district magistrate has to assure himself not merely that justice has been done, but that the Court of Appeal, aided by an English barrister, can find no flaw in his judgment. Magistrates of whose judgments a large number are reversed on appeal are marked out for the censure of the High Court, and the net result is that many

a guilty criminal escapes because the magistrate shrinks from the risk of the entirely unjust censure. Kamanago is infested with barristers who have found life difficult in England, and flock to this land of appeals like vultures to the abattoir near the city.

Improvement may come when the separation between the judicial and executive is complete and a judicial service is formed of men who have the time and skill necessary for the writing of perfect judgments; but only provided that the service is recruited from men who have had considerable executive experience and are acquainted with native character and habits, and that the High Courts are not filled with barrister judges biased against the Executive.

The Mymensingh case will be still remembered. In 1910 Mr. Clarke, district magistrate at Mymensingh in Bengal, being summoned by a sub-divisional officer to quell riots between Hindus and Mohammedans, ordered the search of a godown in which arms were said to be concealed. No arms were found, his action was challenged as illegal, and the High Court mulcted him in heavy damages. The case was carried to the Privy Council, which reversed the decision of the High Court in a withering judgment.

But thanks to the dilatory methods of the Bengal Courts, a period of two years elapsed between Mr. Clarke's action and its final vindication; two years of grave unrest. And during that time no magistrate in the Province had the least security that any prompt measures he might be forced to take for the suppression of disorder would not put him on his trial before a not very competent or impartial bench.

The postponement of justice to legality ~~that~~ <sup>the</sup> vitiates the administration of the law in India as in England breeds in the mind of the native a belief that a defence conducted by a white lawyer before a white judge has a great chance apart from any justification in fact. A similar belief seems to have been developed in the brain of a brilliant Viceroy, who endeavoured to remedy what he considered miscarriages of justice, when Europeans were acquitted of offences against natives. This attitude was so faithfully reflected in the attitude of the Courts in the Mymensingh case that the fiasco may, possibly, be regarded as a late and indirect result of previous action. Two instances of injudicious interference may be mentioned.

A private in a British regiment accidentally shot a native beater who was driving game for

him, and he was acquitted by the magistrate who held the inquiry. The beater's death was clearly the result of mischance; yet the soldier, who had returned to England on the termination of his service, was brought out again and compelled to stand a second trial, but was again acquitted. Shortly afterwards a planter, who thrashed a coolie in circumstances in which to have overlooked the man's offence would have meant mutiny on the estate, was sentenced by the local magistrate to six months' imprisonment. The Government, apparently considering this sentence inadequate, ordered his retrial by a judge of the High Court, who acquitted him in spite of the famous Viceregal dictum that whosoever struck a native struck a blow at the Viceroy. The sequel was a recrudescence of hostility between Europeans and natives, and an outbreak of assaults by natives on Europeans, which culminated in the murders that disfigured the political agitation of the next three or four years.

In another case also the dangers of interference were exemplified. A grievous outrage on a native woman had undoubtedly been committed by British privates, who should have received the severest punishment admis-

sible under the law. Unfortunately the jealousy which persists between the military and civil authorities in the matter of jurisdiction over troops guilty of offences against civilians caused delay in the handing over of the prisoners to the civil arm. In the interval an indiscreetly zealous officer had obtained confessions from some of the accused by persuasion that vitiated their statements as evidence in a civil court, and acting on the advice of their counsel these men withdrew their confessions.

No other satisfactory evidence for the identification of the offenders was forthcoming, and the Government Prosecutor, remarking that though he was there to obtain a conviction, it was no part of his duty to press for a conviction against the law, abandoned the case, and the prisoners were discharged. The regiment, from the Colonel downwards, was disciplined by the military authorities. What else followed was not published; but the gossip of the clubs declared that the Viceroy, justly indignant at the failure of the authorities to punish men who had admitted a shameful offence, but blind to the fact that the failure was due to a system which sacrifices justice to legal quibbles, had conveyed to all concerned, and

to the Commissioner of the division in which the offence occurred, the expression of his grave displeasure. The Commissioner, however, had not dealt with the case, and conscious of his innocence he respectfully declined, it is said, to accept censure.

Permanent improvement in the law-courts must ultimately depend on an improvement in the character of the subordinate native magistracy, criticism of whose well-known weaknesses is tabooed. A certain European judge, who commented in his judgment on the corrupt handling of a civil case by a native magistrate, was censured by the High Court. Another native magistrate is said to have admitted openly that he took bribes from both sides and judged the case on its merits. A third, who had been decorated as a reward for good service, sold justice so openly in his court that the local Bar framed a petition against him. He had previously escaped unscathed from an inquiry held by the Commissioner of the Division, but took alarm when he found himself attacked by a combination of the dreaded white lawyers, and announced his intention of resigning. He broke his word and the petition was forwarded to the Government. He was



suspended for three months, then re-instated but reduced: a punishment implying the verdict of "moderately guilty."

But the audacity of the Bar received due chastisement. The signatories of the petition were called upon to show cause why they should not be dealt with under the Legal Practitioners Act, and after being heard in their own defence were censured for having used the petition as a weapon to compel the magistrate to resign. Further action in the matter was obviously demanded by the facts which had already transpired, and a full inquiry into the magistrate's conduct was promised whenever the advocates should produce their evidence. The Bar Committee, in reply, requested that they should be indemnified against any legal action to which they might become liable if the charges were not proven. The failure of the Commissioner's inquiry shows the demand of the Bar to have been merely an elementary measure of precaution, but compliance with their request was refused and they were urged to institute legal proceedings, and so obviate the need of a departmental inquiry. The result was an *impasse*, and the infallibility of the Bench was once more vindicated. It is difficult indeed to reconcile the

necessity for avoiding public scandal with an honest attempt to secure reform and the punishment of corruption. For once the middle course proved neither safe nor effective.

Conceive the position of a native police officer in a sub-division under a native magistrate. If he relies on legitimate evidence he knows that the man he is prosecuting will possibly escape by suborning false witnesses for the defence and by resort to bribery. If he follows his own impulse and tries to "improve" the evidence, he runs the risk of being detected by his English superiors and cashiered. In the one event the case is probably dismissed, in the other good evidence is discredited if the bad evidence is detected, and there is an equal probability of the dismissal of the case. The police are blamed in any event, either for manufacturing evidence, or for prosecuting false cases, or for failure to detect crime. It is considered impolitic frankly to admit the corruption of the native magistracy, and the police suffer. The European police officer is bullied for the shortcomings of his subordinates because political considerations forbid Government to admit that the source of corruption is to be found in higher levels and to stanch it at its source.

pleasant trip in the cold weather at the public expense.

Meanwhile the Government of India had appointed a Consulting Architect who brought his genius to bear on the problem and incubated a fourth plan for an imposing edifice of stone. The implacable Holmes, however, objected that a stone building was hardly practicable in a province where good stone was unobtainable. The consultant assented, and a committee of three, assembled at Simla, drew up three fresh plans which were all rejected by the Viceroy, who expressed a preference for the Renaissance style. Eventually after many years' delay the work was carried through. It is calculated that the loss of interest alone on money invested in the site, which lay vacant while the rival architects quarrelled about the design, amounted roughly to two lakhs of rupees.

The execution of any great design by the Public Works Department is generally accompanied by bungling due to jealousy among the engineers, and by the spending of sums greatly in excess of the estimates. The history of large schemes all the world over proves that discrepancies between the estimated and the actual cost are not exceptional, but in India such

discrepancies always give rise to rumours of heavy commission on contracts, and scandal does not spare the names of men in high position. That is only natural, since scandal of this kind takes its rise amongst people of the lower social grades, who attribute their own failing to the European services, though the latter are conspicuously free from any trace of corruption. A distinguished Forest officer had this class in mind when he declared India to be the most corrupt country in the world (he had not travelled in the United States), and mentioned that subordinates on fifty rupees a month handled Forest revenue exceeding a lakh per annum, the actual value of their appointments being between ten and twenty times the nominal salary. It is clear that a P.W.D. overseer drawing a hundred rupees a month cannot send his wife and children to the hills for the hot season if his pay is his sole income.

Those in authority have apparently accepted the view that, however highly some men are paid, they will not escape corruption, and it is therefore prudent to save as much as possible on salaries. But this method bears hard on the honest man employed in a capacity in

which the man of doubtful honesty was contemplated when the remuneration was fixed. Consideration of the difficulties which confront the European subordinate, and of the damage inflicted on British prestige if he succumbs to temptation, and not merely a desire to employ an increasing proportion of Indians, perhaps influenced the action of Government in closing certain subordinate services to Europeans. Reflection on the problem renders one conclusion inevitable. Pay men whose employment exposes them to the temptation of bribes a salary sufficient to place them, if reasonably honest, beyond the reach of temptation, and it follows as a corollary that corruption must be punished instead of being ignored. Now if men are incurably corrupt, nothing would be gained for the moment, and a crop of grave scandals, long ripening to the harvest, would have to be garnered. It is difficult, therefore, to blame officials who, placed in a position of power for a brief space, take for their motto *quieta non movere*. But it is tolerably certain that the stringent punishment of corruption, and a modification of the law which makes it penal to offer as well as to receive a bribe, would eventually make corruption the exception in-

stead of the rule. Under the existing law it is, for obvious reasons, difficult in the extreme to obtain proof of the acceptance of a bribe; the witness is far too astute to put his head into a noose. Indubitably the suppression of illegal gratification would reduce the cost and improve the quality of public works.

The P.W.D. or Public Works Department is the "awful example" amongst the great spending departments, but less because it is more corrupt and inefficient than the others, than because its devious ways are brought home to every one in the country. For we all use the roads and many of us live in Government bungalows. Each March brings round many a biting jest and caustic criticism aimed at the Department. For then the Assistant-Engineer, who for eleven months has resisted all one's blandishments and evaded all one's endeavours to get the leaks in the roof mended and the holes in the floor filled up, comes, cap in hand, with urgent entreaties to the tenant to have the house re-painted throughout, wardrobes built into the walls, and new brass bolts fitted to doors and windows, because he has a balance which must be spent before the end of the financial year. If it remains unspent it lapses to Govern-

to be tried. On passing the open door of his garden I saw a social gathering of natives dressed in their best array. The host was the magistrate and the guests were the pleader for Government, the contractor who brought the claim, the head-clerk and accountant of my office, and a few others."

(In the event three claims out of five were sustained by the contractor.)

The cleansing of the Augean stables is a Herculean but not an impossible task. It is less than three centuries since England's greatest Chancellor was degraded for taking bribes, and less than sixty years since the charter of the Honourable East India Company was rescinded. The reflection that the Company's servants were by no means immaculate is one which does not flatter the national pride of Englishmen, but at any rate it affords some justification for an optimistic view of the future in India.

## MISSIONS



## CHAPTER V

### MISSIONS

"The priests exact to span  
All God's circumference."

—ROSSETTI.

"And third came she who gave dark creeds their power

Draped fair in many lands as lowly Faith,  
But ever juggling souls with rites and prayers ;  
The keeper of those keys which lock up Hells  
And open Heavens."

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

THE Backwater is physically an ideal field for the activities of foreign missions. Living is cheap, poverty almost unknown, and tolerance a chief article of the national religion. This tolerance, however, combined with the individualist belief that a man's soul is his own concern, and salvation by proxy an inconceivable idea, produces a passive resistance to conversion more difficult to overcome than active opposition, and the energies of the missionary

find their outlet chiefly in education, hygiene and healing. The sale of patent medicines indeed formed at one time a considerable item in the income of certain missionaries, though profits on the sale of the staple drug, quinine, have been destroyed by the distribution of the drug at cost price through the Post Office. Schools are subsidized by Government, which contributes to the cost of their erection and maintenance, and pupils must pay fees. The balance, if any, to be met out of Mission funds is small, and may be regarded as purchase money for the favourable opportunity afforded by the school for spreading Christianity. The expenditure of the different missionary bodies may thus be fairly considered as expenditure on Evangelical work alone. On this basis progress is comparable only with the progress of the Christian propaganda in China or amongst the Jews, with one important exception. The first mission to commence operations in the Backwater was an American mission, which found ready to its hand a backward tribe, shy but humane, with no beliefs outside a crude Animism, and susceptible to influence. Their efforts in this field have been crowned with success and profit of every kind. The whole

tribe has embraced Christianity of an American type with some modifications of its own, and its inclusion in the census returns disguises the comparative failure of other missions and of this mission in other fields.

It is natural that most converts should be baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of authority and uncompromising dogmatism. A religion which has ceased to be dogmatic has lost its virtue for proselytism; and the rationalist spirit has been at work undermining dogma in the churches since the Reformation. In Europe and America the leaven has wrought with such energy that dogmatism has disappeared from the educated Protestant mind, whether lay or clerical, and the missionary spirit is rarely found co-existing with great intellectual ability. The Christian clergyman whose ministrations are confined to the European population, and who stands aloof from mission work, sees much to admire in the type of man produced by native creeds and much to deplore in the products of conversion. Even in the missionary's household native Christian servants are comparatively rare. Occasionally a man of liberal views is found incongruously employed in mission work; but

if he is wise he keeps his views to himself. One missionary, who expressed admiration for certain features of an Oriental religion, found himself, when on leave, summoned before the Board of Control at head-quarters to answer charges of heresy laid against him by a colleague, and was dismissed. He was afterwards re-instated in consideration of his ability as a school manager, and assigned solely to educational work; but in later years he so far repented his early error as to devote all his energies to Evangelical work. Had the American Board been gifted with prophetic power, its self-confidence would surely have been tempered by the knowledge that seven years later a Congress of the Churches in New York was to declare Hell, long little more than a summer resort with an uncomfortable temperature, finally abolished from that date. The courage of a superb optimism and a genuinely American lack of humour were displayed in the framing of such a resolution in a city with a summer temperature of a hundred and ten degrees Fahrenheit, and governed by Tammany.

For the comparative success of the Roman Catholic mission several causes may be assigned. The Roman Catholic priest alone satisfies the

Oriental conception of priesthood. He is a celibate, he lives in the jungle amongst his converts, and he is free from the suspicion, amounting to certainty where some missions are concerned, of combining religion with trade. Also he does not despise the employment of means such as those with which Lourdes has familiarized the world, and which are especially effective amongst ignorant, superstitious races. There stands in a certain jungle village an exact reproduction of the famous grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, which in the first year after its construction rewarded the piety of its builder by effecting several miraculous cures.

It is certainly easy to pour scorn upon the facility with which the unsophisticated "jungle-wallah" becomes the victim of delusion. But it may check the intellectual pride of the sceptical Englishman to remember that angels in white raiment riding milk-white chargers were seen by his countrymen at Mons in the fourteenth year of the twentieth century, while in that same year the Primate of England avowed a belief in the Devil as a power in human affairs.

There is even less union amongst the missions abroad than amongst the Churches at

home. There the edifying spectacle is offered of a union of Scottish Churches, and the Non-conformist bodies in England at their annual conference sink their differences in face of the common foe. In India the Anglican missions are not strong enough to force union upon the others, but tend to combine with the Nonconformists against the American missions, which are apt to disregard their national maxim, "Dog does not eat dog." A certain degree of restraint and an unwritten code of etiquette regulate the relations of the various missions, but these restrictions are sometimes ignored by the American, who has no hesitation in "jumping" a rival's claim and re-baptizing any converts whom he can persuade to accept his doctrines. Intemperate zeal and haste led one of these American trespassers on a raid into a neighbouring mission field to baptize a lady of greater beauty than virtue, who appeared a week later, at a native religious festival plying her trade, with her father as bully and her mother as pimp. The missionary whose sphere of influence had been invaded naturally lost no time in informing his rival of the true character of this latest convert, and a second journey had to be made for the purpose of excommuni-

cating Phryne and her parents, who had entered the fold at the same time as their daughter. Where these strained relations exist between neighbouring missions, converts "under discipline" in one Church take refuge in the other, like the cautious merchant who spreads his fire insurances over several companies.

Many converts are thus counted more than once in the returns shown by the different missions. A native who has been admitted to the Christian communion by a Methodist missionary, for example, finds when he removes to a town with a Baptist Church, that he is only admitted to the Sacrament on condition of being re-baptized, and his name goes to swell the list of Baptist conversions. In mission schools, with few exceptions, attendance at Bible lessons are compulsory, and the boy who wishes to learn English in a place where there is no Government school must take Christianity with it. Only a small proportion of the school children are even nominally Christians, but the conscientious missionary feels it his duty to teach Christianity even to unwilling pupils. What the value of such teaching may be is a very open question. Missionary societies, like others dependent on popular support, demand

“results” to show for their expenditure, and results must therefore be obtained. The almost cynical indifference felt by the average native towards Christianity is displayed by the fact that numbers of avowed heathens compete annually for the gold and silver medals awarded by a certain Mission Indian Sunday School Union for proficiency in Scripture knowledge. It would be difficult to devise a scheme more likely to discredit Christianity in India than this. Such methods are calculated to rejoice the opponents of Christian dogma and to grieve the supporters of Christian ethics in an equal degree, and the more enlightened missionaries are opposed to all compulsory Christian teaching. All who know the facts, believers and unbelievers alike, are amazed at the vast sums that are collected annually in the British Isles for the purpose of foreign missions.

Many quaint stories, fictitious of course, are told of an old-time missionary trader who worked in the hills of the Assam border. A certain official, calling upon him for the first time, and hearing from the old man's lips a moving account of his experiences, felt a glow of enthusiasm as he listened to the tale, and with tears in his eyes said—



“ You expect, no doubt, to die and be buried amongst your converts, Mr. Griffiths ? ”

“ No, sir ! I guess I'll clear out just as soon as I've made my pile ! ”

Horses, rubber, minerals, orchids, all engaged Mr. Griffiths' attention at different times. He met one day a young military officer returning from a shooting expedition in the hills, mounted on a sturdy hill pony, which he had purchased from a tribesman for eighty rupees.

“ That's a nice piece of horseflesh,” said Griffiths. “ Is it fair to ask what you paid for him ? ”

“ I don't mind telling you, since he is not for sale. I picked him up for eighty rupees.”

“ He's just about up to my weight. I'll give you a hundred and twenty for him.”

“ No, thanks,” was the curt reply, “ I want to see whether I can't train him for polo.”

In the evening the subaltern, over a game of billiards at the club, related his conversation with the missionary.

“ I'll give you two hundred for the pony,” was his opponent's comment on the conversation.

"But," objected the amazed owner, "you haven't even seen the animal; you don't know anything about him!"

"No," was the rejoinder, "but I know Griffiths!"

The hills amongst which Providence decreed that Griffiths should pass most of his days were full of orchids, including many varieties unknown to growers in Europe, but the missionary's duties and avocations had left him no time to make such a close study of the plants as would have enabled him to tap the source of wealth which lay close to his hand. Rumours of the existence of new varieties having reached England, botanists were sent out from Kew to collect specimens for the Horticultural Society. On their arrival at the frontier town where the head-quarters of the mission were located, the collectors were directed by the district officials to apply to Griffiths as the only man who could furnish them with suitable guides from amongst the hill-folk. The missionary received them courteously, and provided them with English-speaking converts acquainted with the hills. He privately instructed the guides before their departure to note carefully what varieties of orchid the

Englishmen took, and on their return sent out parties of his Christians to scour the jungle in search of other specimens of these rare plants. Their work in the hills being over, the collectors lingered a little time in the country, visiting the chief places of interest, and arrived home to find the market already flooded with the new orchids which they had gone out to seek.

The history of Uyesan, a Christian prophet of the Red Ant tribe, illustrates the adaptability of modern Christianity to the needs of the heathen, and is worthy of narration in some detail. In the eighties, Uyesan, a Christian convert and a man of light and leading in his own community, laying claim to special gifts and professing to be divinely inspired, propounded certain doctrines which shocked his religious sponsors but appealed powerfully to his fellow-tribesmen. The mission promptly disavowed and excommunicated him as a dangerous and perverse heretic, but their ban did not prevent him from acquiring a large and enthusiastic following, to the great detriment of the mission's prestige and with disastrous results to its finances. The crisis called for energetic and unhesitating action. The problem was, how to eradicate the heresy without

losing the heretics. The situation was complicated by a sudden local rising, in which his enemies traced the hand of the recalcitrant prophet, and which threatened to attain the dimensions of a general rebellion against British rule. The authorities at head-quarters became nervous, and amongst the telegrams and letters with which they bombarded the district offices was one proclaiming Uyesan a rebel and outlaw, and offering a large reward for his capture, dead or alive. Young Carew-Plumer, the sub-divisional officer, with that insight and rapidity of decision for which he afterwards became famous in the Province, immediately took steps to thwart what he unhesitatingly described as a nefarious ecclesiastical plot to remove a religious antagonist.

"For ways that are dark and for tricks that are vain  
The Missionarce is peccia;,"

he said to himself. "This is the *odium theologicum* with a vengeance."

"There is a price upon your head," he wrote to Uyesan. "Come in and place yourself under my protection."

The prophet promptly obeyed with that shrewd regard for his self-interest not uncommon in the species; and having stowed him in his

bungalow, Carew-Plumer wired to the Government, "Uyesan is in my house. I will hold myself responsible for his good behaviour. Please cancel proclamation."

The Government began to suspect that its nervousness had been exploited by the prophet's religious opponents for their own ends, and at once acceded to the request of the Assistant-Commissioner, whose openly avowed dislike for the mission dated from that incident.

The rising was soon quelled, and Uyesan, who had probably been innocent of any complicity therein, returned to his bereaved followers. His credit was enhanced by the apparent anxiety of the Government for his safety, and his Church increased rapidly in numbers. Offerings poured in, and four or five lakhs of rupees were expended in building huge dharm-salas or rest-houses along the railway line, where his followers met for worship or lodged when worldly affairs brought them down from their jungle villages to civilization. These solid arguments could not fail to influence the views of missionaries hailing from a Christian land where as elsewhere Mammon is worshipped and financial success is the sign of Divine favour. Their preoccupation now became the readmission

of their prodigal to the Church, lest if he died outside the pale the property he had amassed should be lost to the mission. Signs were soon forthcoming of the increased respect in which the once hated prophet was held, and tolerance became the keynote of missionary utterances.

"We have been to hear Uyesan preach," said one young evangelist to an incredulous acquaintance. "He is certainly inspired; his eloquence is wonderful."

"He resembles John the Baptist," said an older minister. "He is rough and uneducated, and holds some unorthodox views, but he is filled with the divine afflatus."

Those who had observed the veering attitude of the mission were not surprised, therefore, to learn that a committee had been appointed to inquire into the teaching of the new Baptist, and the outcome of the inquiry was easily anticipated. The gnat and the camel were alike swallowed at a gulp, though there was one practice which a more fastidious taste would have refused to tolerate. An ancient chronicle remarks—

"Mos est apud illos barbaros ut virgines eis, quos maxime venerentur, crines dono mittant qui pubertatis et primæ adolescentiæ tempore

in pubibus crescant. Id quod non tam amoris pignus quam documentum honoris habetur.”

This quaint custom was unknown to the Board of Inquiry, and they accepted the vulgar explanation that these tonsorial pledges of respect were collected by Uyesan's agents as part of the ingredients of certain pills, which, being swallowed by his followers, were to secure them a place amongst the hundred and forty-four thousand who were to be seated at the Second Advent, then at hand. (Revelation, ch. vii.)

Such a superstition would have revolted unbiassed men. But “there is no falsity so gross,” says Huxley, “that honest men and still more virtuous women, anxious to promote a good cause, will not lend themselves to it without any clear consciousness of the moral bearings of what they are doing.” And the welfare of the mission was certainly a cause for which the members of the Board must have felt themselves constrained to sacrifice mere personal scruples.

Thus was accomplished the white-washing of Uyesan, and he returned to the fold. Unhampered by any saving sense of humour, the mission considered their action so far final

that, when a Municipal Committee, which had the misfortune to lose its school building by fire, obtained permission from Uyesan's elders to occupy temporarily one of his rest-houses for school purposes, the missionary in charge of that field demanded rent for the use of the building. Needless to say he did not get it. Nor, when Uyesan died six years later, did the mission succeed in obtaining possession of the coveted buildings.

"The missionary," said one of them, "knows more about the people than any official. He lives amongst them, attends their weddings and their funerals, shares their joys and their sorrows. He interprets the West to the East." It might perhaps be interesting to learn what interpretation the East put upon the line of action adopted by the West with regard to Uyesan.

Other countries were not slow to discover and exploit the benevolent attitude of the British nation towards missions without discrimination of sect or nationality. The noisy minority who represent the dogmatic spirit at home are ever ready to heap abuse on the head of any critic who dares to doubt the wisdom or utility of missions to the heathen, to criticize their methods, or to resist their demands. Local Governments



are well aware that in any grave issue between themselves and the ministers of dogmatic Christianity, the Government of India might be compelled to throw the Local Government over in order to avoid trouble in the House of Commons. The old cry of the Roman amphitheatre, *Christiani ad leones*, is reversed. It is now *Proconsules ad Christianos*. Equality of treatment is the demand of the missions, but equality is hardly what they desire or obtain. In countries where Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism are the national creeds, grants-in-aid drawn from native tax-payers are paid to schools in which Christianity in one of its many forms is part of the compulsory course, and the native child has in very many places no alternative to attendance at the mission school, if he wishes to learn English. A large proportion of such schools belong to different American Churches, which in their own country receive not a cent from the State towards the support of any schools in which their creed is taught. In India, instead of showing gratitude for their favoured position under the British flag, which they really appreciate, they not infrequently snap at the hand that feeds them. When the Government, for purely political and legal reasons, ratified

the appointment of a Patriarch of the national Church at Madepore, the head of the principal American mission went about Kamanago roundly accusing the Government of anti-Christian sentiments. Had the Scarlet Woman in person issued from the Secretariat Buildings, his indignation could not have been greater.

The secular contest between Church and State persists with curious variations even in the most obscure corners of the Empire, and the quarrel of Henry the Second and Archbishop Thomas may in all essentials be renewed in the sequestered vales of a protected native state. The idea of an *imperium in imperio* has lasting attractions for a not uncommon type of clerical mind. In a certain hill state that marches with the Backwater, and where no taxes are levied beyond those sanctioned by custom for the maintenance of the local chief, all works of public utility are carried out by means of forced labour under the guidance of the political officer. For the repair of the main road through these hills after the torrential rains of the south-west monsoon gangs of villagers are set to work, each serving a specified period before it is relieved. One Sunday a number of the working party "downed tools" and refused to perform their

allotted task. The political officer inquired into the cause of this unprecedented behaviour and found that the strikers were Christian converts who had conscientious scruples which prevented them from working on the Sabbath. The mild, tractable hillman is no fonder of hard work than the noisiest upholder of the voluntary system in England, and he was not slow to see the advantages of acting on the instructions of his ghostly adviser and posing as a conscientious objector.

The Political Officer with guileful tact refrained from asserting his authority and overruling their objections. He permitted them to depart, but gave orders that they were to make up for their holiday by working on the following day. Then he sought out the missionary and inquired whether he had advised his flock to refuse to work on the Sabbath, even when ordered to do so by the representative of the Indian Government.

The missionary admitted that the facts were as the Political Officer apprehended.

"Well," said the latter, "I am responsible for order here, and it is clear that my commands cannot be disobeyed without risk of serious consequences. You will kindly refrain from

issuing any instructions hereafter in contravention of my orders."

"I reserve the right," replied the padre, "to countermand any orders which I consider inconsistent with the religious duties of my Christian converts."

He was as good as his word until the Political Officer, in the exercise of his special powers, had his opponent removed beyond the frontiers of the state. The indignant cleric appealed to the Lieutenant-Governor and to the Governor-General, who both confirmed the action of the Political Officer.

But the matter did not rest there, for the whole powerful machinery of the mission was set in motion, the intervention of the Ambassador was invoked, and in due course the missionary was restored to his bereaved flock.

"From this we learn," as the story books say. But the lesson is obvious and it was circulated to the missionary's colleagues.

But there are, fortunately for the East, men of another type at work in increasing numbers; men who are content to set the heathen an example of the Christian life, to cure his bodily ills and to teach him the elements of sanitation and clean living, resigning dogma to East African bishops and leaving conversions to Providence.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE STEAMER-CAPTAIN

“It was an Ancient Mariner.”—COLERIDGE.

A BACKWATER is naturally the adjunct of a river, and the river Pactolus, which, flowing from beyond the confines of the province, traverses its whole length and empties itself by a hundred channels into the sea, is so all-important a feature of the Backwater, that without it the country could have no real existence. For centuries it was the sole highway, and the numerous steamers which navigate a thousand miles of the main stream and thread the countless creeks of the delta region, still laugh to scorn the competition of the railways. To millions of natives it is as indispensable as the bamboo which furnishes food, houses, cups, platters, mats and a hundred other domestic necessities. The European dredges gold from

issuing any instructions hereafter in contravention of my orders."

"I reserve the right," replied the padre, "to countermand any orders which I consider inconsistent with the religious duties of my Christian converts."

He was as good as his word until the Political Officer, in the exercise of his special powers, had his opponent removed beyond the frontiers of the state. The indignant cleric appealed to the Lieutenant-Governor and to the Governor-General, who both confirmed the action of the Political Officer.

But the matter did not rest there, for the whole powerful machinery of the mission was set in motion, the intervention of the Ambassador was invoked, and in due course the missionary was restored to his bereaved flock.

"From this we learn," as the story books say. But the lesson is obvious and it was circulated to the missionary's colleagues.

But there are, fortunately for the East, men of another type at work in increasing numbers; men who are content to set the heathen an example of the Christian life, to cure his bodily ills and to teach him the elements of sanitation and clean living, resigning dogma to East African bishops and leaving conversions to Providence.

## THE STEAMER-CAPTAIN

its bed, floats down its current vast stores of timber to the sea ports, sinks oil wells on its banks, and transports in the steamers which float on its broad bosom the wealth of a province richer than fabled Golconda. It has borne on its swift-moving flood many a fleet more mighty than that which sailed from Greece to avenge the rape of Helen, or the Armada which Philip of Spain equipped to furnish forth glory for Drake and Howard. It has witnessed the victorious return of nameless warriors whose deeds and sufferings lacked only a Homer to immortalize them. Now, alas! it is chiefly famous as the eponym of a steamship company owned in Glasgow and officered mainly by Scotchmen.

Mr. William de Morgan discusses in one of his delightful books the *Feng Shoay* of an S-shaped couch on the feelings of its occupants. This term is quaintly translated by a Chinese scholar as "the occult influence of geographical position, particularly with regard to tombs"; and my learned friend discusses at some length the importance for *Feng Shoay* of the position of hills and streams. His dissertation explains the existence all over China of those burial-grounds which offer such obstacles to the railway



engineers, and if one could accept his theories, the unique character of the typical skipper of the Flotilla Company might be attributed to the occult influence of the river on which he spends his days, passing to and fro like a shuttle in a loom.

The Flotilla skipper is not the ordinary "shell-back": he is a hybrid. His duties range from the collection of tickets to the navigation of a three hundred foot shallow-draft keelless paddle-steamer along the winding and shifting channels of a great river whose annual rise in flood time is forty feet. He needs the skill of a Mississippi pilot and the astuteness of a London omnibus-conductor. His position is a compromise between the adventurous ill-paid career of the captain of a tramp-steamer and the lucrative dullness of commercial life. He is usually married, for it is generally the desire for domestic happiness that has driven him to abandon his roaming, and the failure to obtain a billet on shore that compels him to become a "mud-plugger." Thirty years ago his duties obliged him to spend a week on each voyage in native territory, and called for the exercise of considerable courage and tact in dealing with an unruly though good-tempered population. The skipper

of the old school was therefore a man of great resource and cool judgment. Recognizing his qualities and the scarcity of men suitable for his position, his owners acted on the Scriptural maxim, "Muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn." He received a good salary and commission on freights, and so long as each voyage showed a clear profit to the Company of ten per cent., no questions were asked about private ventures the captain might engage in. Fortunes were easily made and very often freely spent. Saloon passengers were in many respects treated as the guests of the captain, who could not possibly maintain on the messing allowance he received from the Company the generous table which he provided.

After the annexation and final subjugation of the Upper Province this elastic system disappeared, and only one or two captains of the old school remain to lament the passing of the good old days. The Flotilla is organized now as a purely commercial concern. Every payment is acknowledged on a printed receipt or by the issue of a ticket; accounts are carefully scrutinized in the head office by trained clerks, and indents for stores are rigorously cut down by the superintendent. With the pacifi-

cation of the country the risks that formerly accompanied navigation disappeared, and the profits that were to be made attracted smaller men to enter into competition with the Company, which did not maintain its monopoly without a struggle. Many of the rival concerns which measured their strength against the Flotilla over limited areas of the delta were formed with the sole object of inducing the Company to buy them out at a price much above what they had invested in the cheap second-hand launches which they employed in the unequal warfare. But the shrewd Scotchmen who controlled the fortunes of the Flotilla were little disposed to raise for themselves a crop of trouble by submitting to blackmail of that kind. They preferred to spend their money in breaking each competitor as he arose and driving him off the river.

The process was simple and victory inevitably fell to the men with the long purse. Fast steamers were told off to "shadow" the rival craft and outbid them for popular favour. A regular war of rates ensued, each company cutting the other's tariff until goods were carried at nominal charges and passengers free. Then the Flotilla forced the pace and hastened the finish

by presenting each passenger with a silk handkerchief or scarf in addition to a free passage. Their rivals responded to the challenge, and the natives along the steamer-route made general holiday in order to avail themselves to the full of the blessings showered upon them by the generosity of Fortune. The captains of the competing steamers remained on the most friendly terms, and when they tied up for the night would foregather and discuss the humours of the contest over a "peg." The absurdity of the situation reached a climax when, on one occasion, the intruder ran short of handkerchiefs, and Captain Jura of the Flotilla Company, in order to enable his rival to continue the struggle on the following day, sold him a case of handkerchiefs at a profit of a hundred per cent.

In 19— a last determined effort was made by a syndicate, with considerable capital and a fleet of new and powerful steamers, to break the monopoly of the Flotilla. The Pactolus Navigation Company was too powerful to be summarily disposed of by the old methods, and the Flotilla Company was not unwilling to make terms with the new competitor on the basis of a limited sphere of operations for the syndicate and no reduction of freights. But

the Navigation Company thought it saw a chance of extorting better conditions and declared open war. It was known that the Flotilla Company had for many years past found a difficulty in keeping its dividends as low as fifteen per cent., in spite of watered capital and heavy expenditure on renewals and additions to its fleet. The new Company had visions of fifty per cent. if a favourable agreement could be concluded, or hoped at the worst to sell its ships at a profit, or perhaps even to amalgamate with the older Company. But the Scottish lion's blood was up, and in the war which ensued along eight hundred miles of waterway, no quarter was asked or given. Cargo rates were reduced until every voyage involved a dead loss, and the commission which formed a considerable proportion of the captain's pay dwindled to vanishing point. The Board of Directors at Glasgow equipped at their own personal expense and presented to the managers in Kamanago two exceptionally fast steamers for the purposes of the war, and saw without flinching their dividends reduced from fifteen per cent. to ten. They nailed their colours to the mast, and with undaunted resolution avowed their intention of sacrificing the whole of the

captains' commission and part of their pay rather than yield one jot. Nay, they were prepared even to trench upon their reserve fund of two millions. The hundred pound shares fell from four hundred to two hundred and fifty, and a panic ensued amongst the shareholders, until they were reassured by the news that all shares that came into the market were being quietly purchased by the Directors. The Navigation Company, after a struggle of two years, admitted itself beaten and offered to discuss terms ; but Glasgow was on its mettle and would listen to nothing short of unconditional surrender.

The rival steamers were withdrawn a few months later for lack of capital to provide working expenses, and were bought at a quarter of their cost by the Flotilla. The bank which had financed the unsuccessful venture suspended payment, and the bank-directors, who were said to have falsified their last balance-sheet in order to conceal the truth, were put on their trial and ultimately convicted.

Every man has his pet economy. Some people dislike buying pencils and depend for their supply on the carelessness of others, on the club bridge-markers, on Government stationery, or presents of pocket-books at Christmas. Others

beg, borrow, or steal matches from their friends, their club or a restaurant. When Aldred of the police dined out and played bridge, he was usually requested to turn out his pockets before he went home, and at least a couple of pencils and three boxes of matches were invariably produced. Jones will tear off the blank sheets of his invitations to save the cost of a four-anna scribbling pad once a year, but always keeps a couple of expensive fountain pens in use and scorns any but the best stylographic ink. Smith walks home without umbrella in a shower of rain, because he objects to cab-fares as an unnecessary extravagance, and spends ten shillings at his tailor's in the vain attempt to restore the pristine freshness of his raiment. Brown, who has a weakness for book-buying, saves a twopenny 'bus fare and spends five shillings unnecessarily at a bookshop which he stops to look at on the way. Green, a student of fastidious tastes and ascetic habits, drinks China tea at eight rupees a pound, and consumes a pound in little more than a fortnight, thereby shocking Smith, whose wine bill at the club averages fifty rupees a month. Robinson will waste a quarter of an hour in untying knots rather than cut the string on a parcel, and put

the string carefully away in a drawer, though he is a man of little leisure and declares his time to be worth thirty shillings an hour.

So with the Pactolus Flotilla Company. Its ships are perfectly designed, built, engined and equipped, fitted with electric light and fans, and furnished with brass bedsteads in place of the ordinary bunk. Each ship carries its own supply of flies and mosquitoes, though in Captain George's steamer an endeavour was made to teach the stewards to serve the flies on a separate plate. Three seven-course meals are served daily and the food is good in quality and lavish in quantity. An ice-chest as large as many a native hut serves to keep liquors at a delicious temperature throughout a week's voyage. This is the pound-wise aspect of the Company's policy. Its penny-foolish economies are such as almost entirely neutralize any advantages resulting from its expenditure on luxurious fittings and messing. Although the ships are supplied with drinking-water from artesian wells, perfectly suited for making tea or coffee, these beverages are usually of the same inferior quality as is found on second-rate ocean liners which use distilled sea-water and boil it all day in an iron tank. Fresh milk is obtainable



at many places along the river, and sterilized milk in bottles or tins can be purchased at each terminal port ; yet the skimmed and sweetened Swiss milk of prehistoric days is the usual kind supplied. Sardines and whisky, packed in cases bearing the trade marks of makers whose names have an Early Victorian flavour, recall the famous judicial investigation of the burning questions, "What is whisky?" and "What is a sardine?" The jam is never strawberry, damson or apricot, but "household." The electric fans are not required in the daytime when the ship is under way ; at night, when she is anchored with her head upstream and the air is heavy and still, the dynamos are shut off because the engineers want to go to bed. Then the mosquitoes attached to the ship take possession of the saloon, invade the privacy of the cabins, and combine with the heat to render night hideous and to murder sleep.

One of the last remaining skippers of the early days was Captain Wolsey, a Royal Naval Reservist, and an artist in Aspinall. His favourite occupations were painting empty jam-tins for use as ash-trays, enamelling cable-links for paper-weights, painting Union Jacks on the life-buoys, and decorating the saloon with

designs in tartan. He was a musician, too, and a capable performer of the kettle-drum accompanied by a gramophone. This accomplishment alienated many of the friends whom his sterling good qualities attracted to him. He had always thirsted after the glory won in battle, but the fates had been unpropitious. He had borne a part in no conflict more serious than a discussion, followed by stone-throwing, with coolies whom his masterful ways annoyed. To awe them he installed in the bows of his ship a large wooden image of the fowl that was the appropriate emblem of native royalty before the British occupation, flanked by a dangerous-looking wooden model of a three-pounder gun.

He was less friendly to the natives than his essentially kind nature would dispose him to be, because he blamed their pusillanimity for the loss of the opportunity which he had sought all his days, and the loss had somewhat soured him. When his ship was selected to transport troops on the expedition which ended in the annexation of the Upper Province, he thrilled with the expectation of attaining his great ambition. Every moment that could be spared from his duties was devoted to the furbishing of his arms,

and his spirit rose at every defiant message which the natives, secure in their capital as they imagined, launched at the British forces. But the capture by a flank movement, accompanied with considerable slaughter, of the fort near the frontier, spread dismay at Court; and when Captain Wolsey reached Ghoraserai, where the king's troops were massed to dispute the British advance, he learned to his intense disgust that the generals had received telegraphic orders to offer no resistance, but were endeavouring to delay the advance by prolonging negotiations for an armistice. While a parley was proceeding, a subaltern on board the transport, cleaning his revolver, as subalterns will, without unloading it, accidentally discharged it and wounded a native servant in the leg. The shot temporarily aroused Wolsey's hopes of a fight by the suggestion that the enemy had violated the flag of truce; but he was disappointed and black despair settled upon his spirit when the king eventually surrendered without a struggle. For years he brooded over his disappointment, until the solitary shot became in his imagination a sharp brush with the enemy, and his hallucination grew so real to him that at length he wrote for private circulation an account of the engage-

ment at Ghoraserai, in which he believed he had borne a distinguished part.

In the surrender of the king, George Robinson, another captain of the old school, found his account. He was a man who had used to the full the opportunities offered by the old free-and-easy system of the Company and had amassed considerable wealth. His ship was selected to carry the captive king and queen, with their immediate attendants, to Kamanago, and he determined that his bill for the trip should be worthy of the occasion. On arrival at Kamanago the prisoners and their escort were transferred to an ocean-going steamer, and Robinson strolled round to the Company's office to report himself, and to present his bill for messing to the manager for payment.

"Ten thousand rupees for a week's messing for half a dozen people! Preposterous!" exclaimed the manager, looking up from the bill which Robinson had laid on his desk.

"Have you ever catered for a king?" pertinently inquired the captain.

The manager was bound to admit that he never had entertained royalty, either captive or in the wild state.

"Then you know nothing about it!" was the

triumphant retort. "That king ate more beef-steaks and milk biscuits than any king I've ever met!"

"But Government will never admit a bill like this," argued the manager. "Reduce it by half and call it five thousand, though even that is outrageous."

"Not a bit of it!" replied Robinson. "If you are afraid to send the bill on, give it back to me and I'll take it up to the Secretariat and see the Chief Secretary myself."

After considerable debate the manager at length succeeded in persuading Robinson to cut down the bill to five thousand rupees.

"Now then," said the indomitable skipper, diving into his coat pocket and producing a second document which he flourished under the other's nose, "here is the bill for extras; five thousand rupees."

The manager's power of resistance was exhausted, and he was constrained to send on both bills with an explanatory note. The event justified Robinson's optimism; for the Government, accepting his view that one does not annex a country and capture a king every day, especially at such small expenditure of men and treasure, dealt generously and paid the bill.

Success, according to the ancient Greeks, breeds pride, and pride brings Nemesis in its train. Not content with this *coup*, Robinson contemplated other large gains. The war had caused a cessation of ordinary traffic along the river and huge cargoes were awaiting shipment at various riverine stations. The most valuable of these was a large consignment of fish-paste, which the natives consume in great quantities, lying at Tadipan, the great depôt in the delta where it is manufactured and stored. The scarcity of this commodity in consequence of the war had sent up the price in the native capital, Madepore, and the wily skipper saw an opportunity of heavy commission on high freights and of large profits from private speculation in the malodorous delicacy. So when he was ordered to load up with flour, which was urgently needed for the troops in Madepore, he excused himself, saying that the river had fallen and was blocked by shoals in One Tree Reach; for the carriage of Government flour at low rates was at such a time a very unprofitable occupation.

The next morning Robinson and his steamer were nowhere to be seen, and nothing was heard of him till, three weeks later, he quietly anchored in the harbour of Kamanago. But there are

limits even to the licence allowed to a chartered libertine, and the skipper was called upon to give an account of himself.

“Well, it was like this,” he explained to the long-suffering manager, “I heard, after I left the office and went on board my steamer, that there was better water in One Tree Reach, so I thought I should take advantage of it at once and get away up the river before the water fell again, instead of lying idle here in port. I had no time to warn you or load anything here, but I got off as soon as steam was up and just managed to get the empty vessel over the shoal. Then I loaded at Tadipan and steamed up to Madepore. You will see that I earned a good round sum for the Company on the trip.”

The manager forbore to inquire what the captain's private profits amounted to, but suggested that he might like a holiday for the benefit of his health. His imagination would no doubt require a rest after the strain to which it had recently been subjected. Robinson sagaciously concurred, and sailed for England. At Port Said he received a cable informing him that he was not expected to return to Kamanago, and in England he found a letter explaining that the Company felt themselves unable ade-

quately to recompense a man of his ability, and regretted that they were obliged reluctantly to dispense with his services. Robinson's shrewdness and good fortune did not desert him at home, for in speculations on the Stock Exchange he increased his savings to a quarter of a million sterling; a total surely unequalled by any ship's captain since Noah made his famous corner in live-stock.

Captain Jura, who in his young days was the Company's champion in the struggle with one of their most determined rivals, combined remarkable qualities with the carelessness and extravagance traditionally characteristic of the sailor. He was slightly deaf and possessed the quiet voice and demeanour invariably associated with deafness. The stupidity of native steersmen and lascars, which in his fellow-captains opened the flood-gates of a turgid stream of bad Hindustani and profane Scots, left Jura unmoved. He would eye the culprit with withering scorn and content himself with some expression such as General T—ck—r, popularly known as "Swearing T—ck—r," let fall when reviewing troops at Madras before a princess of the royal blood. A regiment of Madras infantry advanced to the saluting point, strag-



gling like a company of recruits at squad drill. The aide-de-camp behind him saw the general's neck becoming crimson, and touching him on the arm caused him to turn sharply in his saddle and catch the eye of the princess, whose presence he had momentarily forgotten. Swallowing his wrath, he muttered under his breath, just loud enough for Her Royal Highness to hear, "Oh ! you naughty, naughty men !"

For many years Jura commanded a twin-screw steamer with a speed of sixteen knots, plying between Kamanago and Cossimpore, a port in the delta on a minor branch of the Pactolus. His route lay along narrow tidal creeks, the navigation of which requires a skill comparable to that displayed by an expert chauffeur crossing Piccadilly Circus from north to south at midnight. He gave signal proof of his consummate seamanship and resourcefulness when, having the misfortune to break his rudder by striking a snag shortly after leaving Cossimpore, he disdained to delay for repairs, and brought his craft round to Kamanago, steering through the intricacies of the creeks by means of his twin screws.

He combined with his imperturbability a dry humour such as Jacobs delineates. He was

the inventor of a new method of measuring ships. The etiquette of the Flotilla Company demands that, when ships meet in port and one captain visits another, drinks should be called for without delay. Jura found one of his colleagues a little remiss in offering the usual hospitality, so measuring the ship with his eye, he inquired innocently, "How long is this ship of yours?"

"Over all, or between perpendiculars?" asked his host.

"Between drinks!" was the reply.

From that time forward it was necessary merely to glance from stem to stern with an air of calculation in order to elicit the welcome order—

"Boy! Whisky soda lao!"

Martell, better known to the natives as the Fishery Commissioner, spent a considerable portion of his service as Deputy-Commissioner at Mutchelpore, a station on the main stream of the Pactolus, and the Clapham Junction of the river traffic. Craft of every sort and size, from the Madepore express steamers, three hundred and fifty feet long, to thirty-foot launches built for canal traffic, passed the Deputy-Commissioner's house on the river bank at all hours

of the day and night, and the din of their whistles and sirens made work or sleep equally impossible. Beccles was the worst offender, a skipper who prided himself on his skill with the steam-siren, on which he represented a great variety of hideous sounds, from the shriek of a lost soul to the howling of a pariah dog. The booming of the whistle formed the background of the display, which usually commenced when the steamer rounded the bend a mile above the town; and the cessation of the noise only served to make audible the curses which Beccles poured forth in a continuous stream on the head of the steersman as he brought his ship alongside the wharf; for cursing was with him an invariable accompaniment of all the more delicate manœuvres. Even the *sang froid* for which Martell was famous gave way under the mental strain produced by the arias of Beccles, and by his authority an order was issued prohibiting steamers from whistling except on entering Mutchelpore, and limiting them to one blast of not more than five seconds' duration. The first offender against the new rule was innocent of evil intention, for the spring which holds the whistle-valve in place broke, and the booming continued until a lascar clambered up a ladder.

and tied down the whistle with wire. The guilty commander was not detected, for he passed down in the early morning; but Martell relieved his irritation by fining the next two men up for whistling seven seconds.

It was natural that Beebles should resent the curtailment of his opportunities for the performances of sibilant extravaganzas, but Fate was kind and soon gave him a chance of revenge, which he was not magnanimous enough to resist. One morning, on arrival at Mutchelpore, he found Martell's kit on the wharf in charge of servants, who informed him that the Government launch was under repairs and the Deputy-Commissioner proposed to travel up to Fatehpur in the steamer. Beebles hurried the passengers on board, consigned the cargo to perdition, and as soon as Martell's baggage was safely embarked, cast off, leaving the Head of the district, without his servants, to follow by the morrow's steamer.

For touring in his district Martell employed a houseboat, which was towed by the district-launch; and in order to save time, for his was a heavy charge, he travelled as much as possible by night, giving strict orders to the sarang that on no account were his slumbers to be disturbed

by the whistle. Twice in each week Jura's steamer, the *Dragon*, passed through Mutchelpore, and it was inevitable that the Meredithian Spirit of Comedy which presides over human destinies should arrange a meeting between these two exponents of impassive stoicism, in circumstances calculated to test and compare their characters. To say that truth is stranger than fiction is to state merely the obvious truism that the Spirit of Comedy is more skilful in devising dramatic situations than a mere playwright.

The sarang of Martell's launch, rounding a sharp bend one night in a narrow, thickly-wooded creek, took the wrong side in order to cut off a corner, but mindful of his master's injunctions, refrained from giving the two short blasts on the whistle which would have warned any craft meeting him that he proposed to pass to starboard. As he turned the corner he encountered the *Dragon* bearing down upon him at sixteen knots, with a four-knot tide under her. Dazzled by the *Dragon's* electric searchlight, the sarang lost his head and tried to cross to port. Jura saw that a collision was unavoidable and promptly signalled full speed astern. The way of his ship was checked and, had the creek

been wider, he might have prevented the accident. As it was, the steamer crashed into the houseboat, shearing off part of one side and bearing Martell's mosquito curtain away on the anchor. Martell, awakened by the crash, skipped out of bed just in time to escape disaster, and perceiving that the houseboat was sinking, scrambled up the bows of the *Dragon* and stood on the deck in his pyjamas gazing at the wreck.

"Good evening, Major," said Jura, removing his cheroot.

"How do you do, Jura?" replied the Deputy-Commissioner. "I've just come to ask you for my mosquito curtain," pointing to the gauze festooning the flukes of the anchor.

"Certainly!" said Jura. "Won't you have a drink while you're waiting for it? Boy! Bring some whisky and soda."

Jura's generosity and extravagance eventually involved him in serious financial difficulties. He endeavoured to extricate himself by speculation, but only plunged deeper in the mire. During the great land-boom in Kamanago he built a house with borrowed capital, hoping to sell it at a profit. Failing to find a purchaser he proposed to raffle it and sold a large number of tickets at ten rupees each. He was warned,

however, that, lenient as Indian law is in the matter of lotteries, he might render himself liable to severe penalties if he proceeded with the matter, since he had overlooked the fact that the house was mortgaged for over two-thirds of its value, and he had better refund the money he had already drawn. This was impossible, for he had spent most of it in paying his most pressing creditors. So stopping the *Dragon* one morning as she dropped down the river on her usual trip to Cossimpore, he stepped into the dinghy, which conveyed him to a ship bound for China, and he was seen no more in the Backwater.

Only a few weeks earlier another captain in the service of the Flotilla Company, an Australian Irishman named Brady, had left the country disguised as a Nonconformist minister in order to escape the assiduous attentions of his creditors, who, however, received in due course, from the debtor's indulgent father, the full amount of their bills. Brady had all Jura's generosity and extravagance combined with a child-like artlessness in money matters, and like Jura he became infected with the fever of speculation which attacked the province in the nineties. What put the coping-stone on his difficulties

was a loan of thirty thousand rupees which he obtained from the Chetties, or native bankers, at three per cent., and invested in shares in a tin-mine, which was just on the point of paying fifteen per cent. Unfortunately the mine did not pan out so well as was anticipated by the sanguine vendors, and the fifteen per cent. dividend was the first and last. Brady got rid of his shares at a heavy loss, but the debt of thirty thousand remained; and he was soon unpleasantly reminded of a fact which he had overlooked when negotiating the loan, namely that Chetties quote interest *per mensem* and not *per annum*.

The consistent success of the Company and its enormous earnings are evidence of sound management, and of the wisdom of employing Europeans at good salaries in all responsible posts. All their steamers except the smallest launches are officered by Europeans. In a province that marches with the Backwater, where similar conditions prevail with regard to inland navigation, an older company owning a fleet many times larger than the Flotilla, and in every respect except one managed on the same lines, has shown very different results. The older company has gradually replaced all



its expensive European staff, by natives on smaller pay, with the results which men acquainted with Orientals might have anticipated. While the Flotilla Company experiences some difficulty in keeping dividends down to the normal rate of fifteen per cent., the other company's dividends have gradually fallen to two per cent. Casual losses amount in the Flotilla Company to about seven per cent. of the net income; in the native-managed concern this percentage is fifty-seven. When next His Imperial Majesty's Government appoints a Royal Commission to investigate the working of the Indian Services, might not the member for Commerce and Industry invite the managers of huge commercial enterprises like these to give Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and others the benefit of their experience?

THE B.S.R.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE B.S.R.

“Only a Colonel from Chatham can manage the railways of State.”  
—KIPLING.

THE superior staff of the Backwater State Railway resembles an English county cricket team : it is largely composed of amateurs. The men in charge of the permanent way, engineers engaged in survey or the construction of new lines, and the officials of the locomotive and carriage department are trained, professional men selected for their proficiency in the work they have to perform. The office staff and the traffic department are recruited from the *hidalgo* class. The name *hidalgo*, as every schoolboy learns in the fourth form, is derived from the Latin *filius alicujus*, and means therefore “a man with a father.” It is a social maxim in the Backwater that if there is any doubt as to a man’s ancestry to be inferred

from his complexion, you may allude to his father, but it is better to avoid any reference to his mother. In the B.S.R., if you have cause to wonder what are the qualifications of any individual for the appointment he holds, you ask who his father was. Every man in "the traffic" has a father, and that is generally his qualification for the post he fills, or of which, at least, he draws the emoluments. He has the true amateur's scorn of professionalism, and regards his colleagues of the "loco" and engineering staffs with tolerant superiority. The type is becoming scarce in these strenuous times, when graceful inefficiency is rudely thrust aside in the rush and turmoil of commercial life. Such men were once common in the colonies, where they were either licked into shape and became useful citizens or degenerated into "remittance men"; but the self-governing colonies now exclude them. The last retreat of the *hidalgo* is a new province or a new colony; but even our youngest colonies are now self-governing, and the last acquired provinces of the Indian Empire are long out of their infancy. Neither a self-governing colony nor a province which has emerged from the chaos that follow annexation offers a suitable dumping-ground

for the waste products of our public schools. When the B.S.R. is forced by the growth of public opinion to recognize that a railway exists primarily for the convenience of merchants and travellers, and not for the benefit of young men with no special training or aptitude, the *hidalgo* will be exterminated from one of his last haunts. Perhaps an asylum may be found for a few selected specimens in the *enclave* which is being formed in Africa for other interesting species that are in danger of becoming extinct.

Corruption is by no means limited to the acceptance of bribes, and any man who is thrust into a position for which he has only his father's influence to thank owes his appointment to nepotism, which is merely corruption of a very subtle kind. It is extremely improbable that such a man, having never felt the force of competition, will either appreciate his good fortune, or attempt to perform otherwise than perfunctorily the duties of his post. The special vigilance which is required in dealing with a large staff of native subordinates, enjoying exceptional opportunities for fraud and speculation, can certainly not be expected, nor is it found. The railway authorities appear to act on the principle which has been tacitly avowed by

others also: the native will be corrupt however highly he is paid; let us therefore keep his salary as low as possible, and save what we can without taking the trouble to do more than confine his illegal gratifications within limits.

This is an elastic policy, and the station-master and the ticket-clerk have availed themselves to the full of their opportunities. At the busy season, when grain is being conveyed to the seaports and there are heavy demands on the inadequate rolling-stock, an option on wagons is openly sold. A closed truck carrying ten tons fetches three rupees in the siding, and its passage through every engine-changing station must be facilitated by further applications of "grease," or the owner of the freight may find his goods cut off and so miss his market. The large firms have long ago given up all attempts to arouse the lethargic amateurs whose inspection-carriages may be seen drawn up in the siding of any station where a "week" is in progress, and place their own agents at all strategic points with a bag of rupees for the station-master. The firm of Silver & Grabbitz, to whom these methods were perfectly intelligible, took the station-master at Dhurripur the head-quarters of their forest concessio

into their confidence, and paid him fifty rupees a month to keep them supplied with the special trucks necessary for transporting timber. This fact was well known to all the young men in their employ at Dhurripur, and must have reached the ears of the Traffic Superintendent of the section; but the railway authorities apparently connived at the bribing of their subordinate. Nor was this an isolated instance of such an arrangement. Silver & Grabbit were but *primi inter pares*, and had the courage to admit their principles. They were so far convinced of the practical superiority of their own system and the desire of rival firms to obtain an insight into the details of its working, that they usually made their servants sign an agreement not to enter the service of any other firm in the province on the conclusion of their term. Further than that, they rarely renewed an agreement. Most of their employees terminated their services with them before they could learn half the mysteries of the trade, and only a few choice spirits, whom they felt they could implicitly trust to continue the tradition, were retained to preserve continuity of organization.

Station-masters are but human, and occa-

sionally one would emulate the folly of the rustic proprietor of the gold-laying goose. At Shikarabad in 1905 the station-master found the demand for transport so great that he was not content with the usual gratuity of three rupees per truck, and sold the available stock singly to the highest bidder. The price went as high as ten rupees before the conscience of one of the purchasers smote him and impelled him to petition the Commissioner of the Division to inquire into a scandal which had reached such outrageous proportions. No measures of any consequence resulted, but what could be expected? The company can hardly inflict severe penalties for offences which it takes into calculation in assigning the pay of the various grades, and in fact it refrains from prosecuting even men who have been guilty of embezzling its own funds and not merely of robbing the public.

When it does inflict punishment the consequences are very often grotesque. Hurst, the military chaplain at Bhurrajhil, was travelling by train when a violent altercation took place at a wayside station between the Babu station-master and the Eurasian guard, and in the course of the quarrel the Babu became very abusive. The guard, seeing that the padre's



attention had been aroused by the wordy strife, said to him—

“I hope you will bear witness, sir, to the abusive language this man is using. I intend to report him.”

Hurst acquiesced and mentioned the matter to the District Traffic Superintendent, who, after an inquiry into the case, reduced the station-master and transferred him to a smaller charge, where he had to double the parts of station-master and booking-clerk. Meeting the guard again not long after, Hurst remarked—

“Well, guard, I hear your Babu friend was punished.”

“Yes, sir,” was the reply, “he was reduced all right, but he didn’t mind.”

“Surely he gets less pay?” objected the padre.

“Why, yes, sir,” grinned the guard, “but he’s his own ticket clerk now, and he makes a bit on the tickets as well as on the trucks.”

For the benefit of the uninitiated it is necessary to give the substance of the guard’s explanation of the process by which a profit is made on tickets, though the price is printed on each. Booking offices at intermediate stations are, according to rule, opened twenty minutes before

the arrival of a train and closed on its arrival. Severe penalties in the form of excess charges are imposed on passengers travelling without tickets. The booking-clerk can so arrange, either by opening the booking-office late, or by a slight exaggeration of his natural dilatoriness in selling tickets and giving change, that on the arrival of the train there are still passengers clamouring for tickets. He can then give short change, relying on the impatience of the waiting passengers to shout down any protest on the part of his victim, and hustle him away from the window; or he can profess to have no change and force the would-be traveller either to abandon his dues, or postpone his journey, or become liable for excess charges by travelling without ticket; or he can shut the booking-office altogether and refuse to re-open it except in consideration of an extra charge on each ticket. On the rare occasions when a local train is punctual the happy booking-clerk reaps a rich harvest from the tardy native who, relying on its normal unpunctuality, has to sprint to catch it.

It used to be said that the South-Eastern Railway was the cheapest in the world, for it would carry a third-class passenger all day

for about half a crown. That was an exaggeration. But the B.S.R. does actually carry third-class passengers from 6.30 a.m. to 7 p.m. for exactly half a crown. The average speed works out at something less than ten miles an hour, including stoppages. But these are so long and numerous that, in order to maintain the average speed of ten miles, the driver must take advantage of every gradient in his favour. A speed of thirty-eight or forty miles on the down grade is commonly attained on one section, even round curves and in spite of antiquated rolling-stock and a badly laid track, over which any speed exceeding twenty-five miles was declared by railway experts to be unsafe. It was most probably on this section that a globe-trotter addressed to a local official the observation—

“This track is very rough.”

“It is,” assented the officer, “but one gets used to it.”

A few minutes later the train suddenly jolted heavily, then proceeded more smoothly.

“She’s running much better now,” chirped the traveller.

“Yes,” rejoined his fellow passenger, “we’re off the line.”

Predictions of a bad accident are freely made,

and derailments are an ordinary occurrence; but the Providence which protects children, drunken men and the B.S.R. has so far prevented serious loss of life. The Traffic Manager himself was most appropriately one of the first to experience the consequences of overriding the regulations of the Railway Board. His palatial inspection-carriage was overturned on the branch line just mentioned, happily without injury to its bulky occupant. The prophets of ill were naturally gleeful over the fulfilment of their warnings, and their joy was all the less restrained because the popular and jovial manager escaped unhurt. But their hopes that now at length something would be done to improve matters were woefully disappointed. The Traffic Manager simply abstained thereafter from imperilling his life on the branch lines, and travelled only by the main line mail.

It is a commonplace that the strength or weakness of any organization is best exhibited in an emergency. Efficiency and promptitude in dealing with the situations which inevitably arise in a country with a tropical rainfall are not virtues that would be anticipated in a railway staff recruited mainly from hidalgos with a public-school education. The slight breaches

of the permanent way which result from local thunderstorms are dealt with methodically by the subordinate staff, but a serious breach which calls for the intervention of the "bosses" entails grave dislocation of traffic for considerable periods. When in 19— the line was breached between Madepore and Bhil Junction, the intelligent District Traffic Superintendents who gathered at the breach were at a loss to devise means for carrying the mails across the gap, until a native, who had sailed his canoe over some miles of flooded country in search of adventure, offered to help them, and in the course of an hour safely conveyed the bags across. He then suggested that a remuneration of two rupees would not be too much for all his trouble. To this, young Clive the District Traffic Superintendent, replied that he regretted there was no budget provision for expenditure on boat hire—an answer truly worthy of our common enemy the Accountant-General. Matheson, the Postmaster-General, who had run down to the breach in the interests of the mail service, came to the rescue, and relieved Clive's embarrassment by paying the charge himself. Having seen the mail service re-established, Matheson returned to Kamanago,

but was soon recalled to Madepore by the egregious action of Clive.

It was obvious, even to the moderate intelligence of an hidalgo, that a train which spent two hours in the transshipment of passengers and mails could not run to its usual timing. Clive therefore arranged that the mail train should leave Madepore two hours in advance of the usual time and run beyond the breach on the old schedule. The first result of this arrangement was that the weekly homeward mails from no less than twelve district headquarters served by trains which connect with the Madepore mail at Oldtown Junction, were left behind. Matheson had perforce to travel back to the breach, where Clive was still superintending the transshipments, and explained to him carefully with pencil and paper, that whereas the margin allowed to trains meeting the mail at Oldtown was only an hour, there was between the arrival of the Madepore mail in Kamanago and the closing of the bags at the General Post Office an interval of twelve hours. Therefore it would be better to take the extra two hours required for transshipment from the twelve hours available at Kamanago than to delay mails from a large number of out-stations a whole

week, or close the European mails at those stations twenty-four hours earlier. This journey necessitated for Matheson an absence of two full days from his office, with the consequent accumulation of work normally heavy and increased by the inevitable accidents of the monsoon season. But he had gauged Clive's mental capacity at their previous meeting and despaired of making clear to him in a letter the very obvious objections to his modification of the train service. The sacrifice of two days was, he considered, necessary, and would, in the long run, prove an economy of time.

The vagaries of the rainfall provide problems for solution which would tax even the resources of a competent and skilled organization. The bursting of the Banyan Tree Tank, which has already been mentioned, perhaps excused the utter disorganization of the railway service for ten days, but the suspension of trains for a month was an inconvenience which would have been tolerated in no other province of the Empire.

Railway engineers have been accused of carelessness, or indifference, or a desire to sacrifice efficiency to economy in construction, because they do not put in bridges wherever the line is breached. But a record kept since the open-

ing of the line shows that the breaches occur in different places every year, and rarely in the same place twice. This is natural in the flat country traversed by the main line. There are few well marked depressions, and a heavy tropical storm may cause the banking up of water at almost any point along the route. Still there are many instances in which, in order to save the cost of bridging, embankments have been built in positions where they are certain to be washed away; and these embankments are renewed from year to year out of revenue. This is one of the consequences of the fixed policy of the Indian Government—only recently modified—to construct railways out of revenue and not with borrowed capital. Under such a system there is every inducement to cut down the cost of construction in order to get lines built quickly. The increased cost of working due to cheapness of construction is no doubt a check on railway development, since it reduces the revenue to that extent; but it may be the construction of new lines in another province that suffers; all which is bad policy, bad argument and bad economics. But then this is the glorious East.

: When the survey for the Cossimpore branch



was made it was discovered that the line would cross at right angles an old bed of the Pactolus, and at certain points this bed lay fifty feet below the level of the line. It was known that in flood time the spill of the Pactolus flowed into its former course, and the Assistant-Engineer in charge of that section of the line, a man with considerable experience of Indian rivers and their ways, urged the Chief Engineer to put in more bridges than were sanctioned in the estimates. His proposals were negatived, but the shrewdness of his forecast was proved by the happenings of the first rainy season which followed the construction of the embankment and the erection of the bridges. The scour of the flood water, confined in the narrow limits assigned to it, was so great that the foundations of the brick piers, thirty feet below the surface of the soil, were undermined, one of the piers was bodily toppled over, and the girder resting on it was buried so deep that it could not be recovered even when the water subsided. The revetments of the bridge were carried away, and the river itself indicated the width of the opening which would be adequate to its needs. The hint was taken when work was resumed, and the new bridges were

part of a small minority which, when the line was opened, stood the test of traffic through the rainy season. The majority had to be replaced.

At another point where, to save bridging, an embankment fifty feet high had been built, it was found that the earthwork was slipping southward along a sloping bed of clay, and tons of stone had to be sunk to hold it in place, while a detachment of coolies encamped on the line in order to ram earth under the sleepers after the passage of each train. It would be interesting to compare the estimated cost of reconstruction with the actual cost, and to learn the extent were the expenses of the first three years' only reckoned, on this section of twenty-five miles. Under such building of the Wonuma section, it is to be said, illustrates no principle or policy to cut down. There the high road and the railway to get lines many miles side by side, the slope of working distance from the road to the railway. is no doubt a chance demanded that the culverts since it reduces them should correspond with those but it may be the case that no such correspondence another province that consequently, when the rain had policy, had arguments through the road culverts. But then this is the glory of railway embankment. When the survey for the right angles and flow,

alongside the line until it found an outlet. The inevitable result was delayed until the sixth year after the opening of the line. In that year a heavy fall of rain in August caused a flood, and the impact of torrents which poured through the road bridges, with the pressure behind them of masses of water held up by the road embankment, cut watercourses in the places where they should have been originally. This occurrence, which was predicted by laymen and might have been foreseen by the engineers themselves, so disheartened the authorities that they did not attempt to put the line in working order until the return of the dry weather; and so dilatory were their proceedings that in the following June, when heavy rain might quite reasonably have been expected, the foundations of some of the new bridges were scarcely begun. But the Providence of the B.S.R. intervened and postponed the rains to July.

Collectors of statistics have noticed that roughly two-thirds of the shooting accidents recorded in the newspapers are due to the carelessness of people in dealing with guns known to be unloaded. The loaded gun is comparatively harmless because it commands respectful handling. Similarly in railway matters, an

SOME CIVILIANS AND OTHERS

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOME CIVILIANS AND OTHERS

“Why man, he doth bestride this narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Creep under his huge legs and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.”

—SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Cæsar*.

“Gallimaufry : a hash, a medley, a hodge-podge.”

—ANNANDALE'S *Dictionary*.

THE unpopularity of the Indian Civilian, which has already been mentioned, is not at all justified but is quite explicable. The typical Civilian, like other types, suffers from the drawback of being non-existent. He is a composite mental concept embodying all the most objectionable features of those individual members of the species who have jarred our nerves or ridden rough-shod over our tenderest feelings. The great majority of the men drafted into the I.C.S. are men of exceptional ability, energy and integrity. Hence it is the more

regrettable that a perverted spirit of trades-unionism renders it practically impossible to get rid of the remainder at the end of their probationary period—the minority whose genius, such as it is, verges on madness. The incense which the crafty Oriental burns before the shrine of such a man intoxicates his weak head, and in his dealing with others he is prone to exhibit “the evil spirit of the Jack-in-office which prompts him to make some epigrammatic reply,” instead of furthering the business in hand. Occasionally a conceited youngster receives a rebuke. “I pass over your no doubt unintentional rudeness and proceed to the point under consideration,” wrote a Commissioner to one of these conceited fledglings.

Beyond the reach of bribery, such men are not proof against more subtle forms of corruption, and their vagaries, illuminated as by the light that beats about a throne, tend to bring the whole service into discredit. The aggressively superior airs of that service promote a spirit of hostility which seizes upon and perpetuates every scandalous rumour, and this fact accounts for the rather low esteem in which the Civilian is privately held by men employed in other branches of the public service or

engaged in commerce. The virtual impossibility of removing even men of such character and habits as would secure their prompt dismissal from other services, has the effect of making the senior service of the Indian Empire appear to be the only one in which undesirables are tolerated. There are only two unpardonable faults in the Civilian: venality, of which the records of forty years show only one case; and criticism of his own Service.

Pelham was for fifteen years the *enfant terrible* of the Commission. He flouted his senior officers, disobeyed the orders of the Government and paralysed the trade of the district by taking with him the keys of the Treasury when he went on tour; but for everything he did he contrived to find some pretext or justification, which made it difficult to state a case against him. Finally he was transferred to the judicial branch, where it was hoped his peculiar aptitude for annoying others would find less scope. But within a year India was startled by the famous Semaso judgment, in which he censured the whole judiciary of the province from the High Court downwards. Consternation ruled at Simla, and the Olympians braced themselves for a determined effort.

to get rid of the pest. While the battle raged furiously over the document which had brought about the crisis, Pelham made the one tactical mistake of his career and quitted India without leave. The Government, with a deep sigh of relief, ordered his removal from the Service for breach of one of the articles of his covenant with the Secretary of State, thus dispensing with the necessity for a tedious inquiry into the merits of the questions raised by the harassing judgment. The High Court exacted a cheap vengeance when it refused to Pelham, who was a qualified barrister, permission to practise as an advocate in the law-courts of the province. But he had the satisfaction, a few years later, of reading a judgment of the Privy Council, wherein an opinion of the High Court scarcely less favourable than his own was expressed in politely scathing terms.

That the ground of Pelham's dismissal was merely a pretext for getting rid of a troublesome critic was shown by the treatment of Johnson, a brother-officer of Pelham. Johnson, like Pelham, had grown restive under what he considered excessive interference with his performance of his duties, and adopted Pelham's plan of carrying the keys of the Treasury with



him on tour. This evoked a sharp reprimand from the Commissioner, to which Johnson replied by a request for privilege leave, and in anticipation of sanction set out for the frontier on a fishing expedition. The refusal of his leave did not reach him until he had already enjoyed a week's holiday, and it left him unmoved. To a telegram recalling him to duty, on pain of suspension if he disobeyed, he replied, "Suspension is what I crave. A full inquiry will then be necessary." A self-effacing Governor was then at the head of affairs, who shrank from the semi-public washing of dirty linen inseparable from an inquiry. The Commissioner was accordingly instructed to "climb down." Johnson was allowed to finish his leave, and received a promise that, if he returned quickly to duty, all would be forgiven. He had, in fact, based his calculations on the unwillingness of the Governor to take any measure likely to attract the attention of the Government of India, in whose favour he stood perhaps less high than he deserved.

The feat which made Johnson famous was administering an outlying district of the Backwater from the capital of the neighbouring province. His head-quarters were within easy

reach of Babupore, and the tedium of life at Safarai tempted him to take the weekly steamer up the coast, leaving instructions that all letters should be forwarded to him at the United Services Club, Babupore. His absence was not discovered by the Local Government for three weeks; then he received a telegram, asking him what he was doing in Babupore.

"I am administering the district of Safarai," he replied.

"The district of Safarai cannot be administered from Babupore; return at once," was the abrupt comment of the Governor.

"Excuse me," retorted Johnson, "I am demonstrating to you that Safarai can be run from Babupore. I have carried out my duties here for nearly a month without a hitch, and you were not even aware that I had left the district. Besides, you should have said '*Please return.*'"

Johnson was a man of undoubted capacity and great personal charm. With proper handling he would have been a valuable officer, but he could not brook the stern and unsympathetic spirit which for many years marked the proceedings of the Secretariat and reached its fullest development at that time.

For twelve years Johnson's talents were wasted. In that period he took leave nine times and spent ten months on leave without pay. It was not till the province was administered by a Governor who combined ability with tact and sympathy that Johnson settled down to steady work.

His predecessor in charge of Safarai was Watkins, a typical example of the product of competitive examination, combined with fixity of tenure. He lacked stability of character and dissipated his energies in various unprofitable directions. He was a professed admirer of the native, but that pose may have been intended to serve as an excuse for his domestic arrangements. Another member of the Commission, a prolific author who had every reason for disliking the natives, for they had sought to kill him in connexion with a commercial dispute in which he had no personal share, successfully overcame any resentment he might feel and in his writing evinced a similar admiration. His books had the unhappy effect of filling the minds of young officers in later days with many fond illusions of which they had to rid themselves painfully after bitter experience.

Watkins loved an argument, and "Spy"

might have made a capital cartoon of him in his favourite native undress, striding up and down his verandah in front of a guest ensconced in a long chair, challenging or qualifying every statement of his guest, and almost invariably prefacing his objection with, "There I don't quite agree with you." But in Safarai he lacked material to sharpen his wit upon, for he himself was President of the Municipality as well as Deputy-Commissioner, the police officer was a nonentity with no independent views, and the Civil Surgeon was a Babu. Some zest was added to life for a brief space when the Civil Surgeon applied for permission to extend the jail on land belonging to the municipality, and Watkins threw himself heart and soul into the affair. As Deputy-Commissioner he supported the Civil Surgeon's request, while as President of the Municipality he felt bound to oppose it. The humour of the situation did not appeal to the bewildered Babu, and in the midst of the discussion he applied for casual leave and went for ten days to Kamanago, handing over charge of the jail to the Deputy-Commissioner.

The ardour of Watkins was increased rather than checked by this fresh development, and

in his new capacity as Superintendent of the Jail, he addressed himself as President of the Municipality in strong terms, chastising his attitude of selfish parochial opposition towards a proposal for the public benefit. To this the President replied in equally caustic terms and forwarded to the Deputy-Commissioner, for information, a copy of the letter from the Superintendent of the Jail and of his own reply. The Deputy-Commissioner expressed surprise at the reprehensible tone of the President's letter and called upon him to withdraw it. This, in his capacity as President, Watkins flatly refused to do, and declining to accept the censure which he had incurred from himself as Deputy-Commissioner, demanded that the correspondence should be laid before the Commissioner. The Deputy-Commissioner was obliged to assent to this demand, and summoning the President of the Municipality and the Superintendent of the Jail to accompany him, travelled up by the next steamer to the head-quarters of the Division, where he invited the Commissioner to settle the dispute. The Commissioner, a little puzzled at first by seeing the whole correspondence signed with Watkins' hieroglyph, soon grasped the position and burst into a hearty

laugh, treating the affair as a jest elaborated by his junior with the object of getting away for a few days from Safarai, but Watkins, solemn to the last, affected pained surprise that a matter of such grave importance should be handled with so much levity.

Denton, a few years junior to Watkins, had a similar mental cast. He formed himself on the model of Watkins, who won his fervent admiration, but went much further and took himself more seriously. He discoursed with much reason and eloquence on the attitude of Britons towards natives, blaming the narrowness and *morgue* of the former for the lack of cordiality in the relations between the two races. He himself was on the most intimate terms with the people, of whose social and domestic virtues he was in a position to make a careful study. When he was stationed at Mutchelpore the club consisted of four members, two of them married, the other two unofficially married. The former pair, instigated by their wives, constituted themselves a special meeting and moved the expulsion of their erring brethren. These retorted later in the day by holding a similar meeting and expelling their unco' guid critics. Having thus

expressed their opinions of one another, the four continued to meet at the club on moderately friendly terms for lack of more congenial society.

"East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," may be an erroneous and partial view, but it is useless to blame individuals for racial instincts. A man may agree with the critic of F—— H——'s great book on the Backwater, who said, "I care not whether it is true or not; it is a beautiful book and it was worth writing," without allowing the book to influence his opinions. But every young Civilian who reads it should read as an antidote to its subtle poison some carefully reasoned work like Sir Edwin Arnold's *East and West*, or Meredith Townsend's *Europe and Asia*, and reflect on the author's plea for greater courtesy but not greater intimacy between the two. Familiarity in this case generally breeds contempt on one side or on both, and men who cultivate intimacy may do great harm with every intention of doing much good.

*Plus imprudens quis fecit quam prudens mali.*

Men of this type are only too common in the Backwater, though they generally shed their illusions as they grow older, and most of them

are saved from serious error by the unselfishness of their objects. But now and then one is found whose interest in the native is a selfish one and whose infatuation drives him to the length of upholding the desirability of intermarriage even when the wife is white and the husband coloured. Perversion to this degree amounts to mental disease and should be treated as such. The memory of one such misguided man has not yet faded from the Backwater. He answered to J. K. Stephens' scurrilous jesting description of his friend Oscar Browning, known familiarly in Cambridge as O. B. "Have you ever noticed, O.B.," he said, "how many adjectives in the dictionary beginning with OB are applicable to you? There is obese, obnoxious, obstinate, and so on." Few of these, from obese to obtuse, were inapplicable to this warped genius, whose very appearance inspired everybody with regret that the provisions of the Deportation Act of 1806 were not occasionally extended to Government officials.

The strange prepossession which renders some officials, in their dealings with natives, "to their virtues more than kind and to their faults a little blind," is most strongly developed  
Assistant Political officers in protected



states. These men are selected from the ranks of the Provincial Civil Service and their elevation from the charge of a subdivision to the nominal control of half a dozen petty chiefs, with elephants to ride and an escort of military police when they make a round of official visits to the local royalties, distorts their views. They live in out-of-the-way stations and rarely meet men with different interests or a different outlook from their own, and they become mentally myopic. Their zeal for the welfare of the tribes entrusted to their charge is gradually transformed into a paternal solicitude. They become as incapable of seeing any evil in the tribesmen as a fond mother with a spoiled child, and eventually pose as the guardians of an unspoiled race of primitive Arcadian virtues against corruption by Western influences and oppression by a harsh suzerain government. One of these chiefs, being annoyed by a wife, and reflecting that he could quite well spare her, for he had several others, killed her with a shot-gun. The fact was notorious, and the Political Officer was constrained to inquire officially into the cause of the lady's death. The chief explained that he was aiming at a pariah dog, when his wife got into the line of fire, and so

the unfortunate accident occurred. "And the Sahib," gleefully adds the Tai when he tells the story, "believed him!" The chief is locally known as the Dog-shooter, but he is described in a note by the Political Officer as "one of my most influential and respected chiefs." The use of the personal pronoun is characteristic.

A few days after this note was written Major Muscroft, Intelligence Officer in the Tai country, died in circumstances which form an illuminating comment on the indulgent attitude of the politicals. Muscroft had married a Tai wife and employed only Tai servants, of whose fidelity he was so assured that, in a will executed only a few weeks before his death, he had left the greater part of his small fortune to one of them, who had served him for many years. On the morning of his death he had made some purchases in the bazaar at Walauk, and when paying for them produced a roll of notes from his breast pocket. A few hours later he fell dead from heart failure at the top of a steep ascent, which he had climbed in company with his faithful followers. A messenger was sent in to Walauk to summon the doctor, who set out at once for the hill. He found Muscroft's body lying where he had fallen, watched

over by his sorrowing Tais, who had employed the interval in rifling their late master's pockets and removing everything of value that was found upon him.

It is perhaps not out of place, in connexion with this curious infatuation, to note that the criminal statistics of the Backwater, compared with the figures for Greater London—not the most virtuous part of England—show that arrests for murder in the Province are more than twice as numerous per million of population as the actual murders reported in London. These figures take no account of the many undetected and unreported murders and the deaths which are falsely reported as the result of snake bite or similar accidents. A low estimate of the value of human life does not argue moral depravity, and the frequency of murder does not prove a low moral tone, but the indifference with regard to the discovery and punishment of the murderer shows an undeveloped civilization. This indifference may be attributed in part to the national religion, which forbids the taking of life, even the life of a murderer, though the inefficiency of the great Teacher's commands to check murder illustrates the powerlessness of a mere religious

prohibition to vanquish the impulses of a passionate race. The respect for life has become a mere piece of ritual. The man who will brush a mosquito away without hurting it, avoid a snake but make no attempt to kill it, or allow a maimed and diseased dog to drag out a painful and loathsome existence, terminated only by starvation, will in a fit of passion maim the oxen on which he spends such loving care, or lay his wife dead at his feet with one blow of the heavy-bladed knife which is at once the national weapon and chief agricultural implement. This instrument he learns to employ from his very infancy for all purposes, from sharpening a pencil to cutting down tough bamboos. He becomes, consequently, so expert in its use that he never strikes with the flat or the back of the blade, and when he seizes the weapon in a fit of blind rage, the handle fits itself to his hand as surely as the butt of a revolver to the palm of a Winans, and his aim is as unerring as if every movement were carefully calculated. A murder of this kind does not necessarily imply a high degree of moral guilt.

There is on the other hand a large percentage of crimes of violence, such as rape, assault and

robbery, often accompanied by acts of fiendish and deliberate cruelty for parallels to which we have to search the records of the Inquisition or the Chinese table of punishments. To condemn the whole nation on the strength of such criminal statistics would be as unjust as to accept the horrors collected by *Lloyd's Weekly News*, for the alleviation of the housemaid's Sabbath day, as giving a faithful picture of English society. But unbiased consideration of the facts will show that underneath the picturesque, sunny and joyous exterior, which has led so many casual visitors to the Backwater to glorify the nation as the first to discover the secret of human happiness, there lies a vein of sheer savagery which the national religion has in a score of centuries scarcely touched.

A fierce controversy is waged round the various problems which arise out of these data. The innumerable discussions proceed generally on some such lines as these:—

A. (*A merchant of Kamanago and an advocate of reaction.*) The best thing you can do for the native is to leave him as much as possible to his own devices and exclude other races from the Province. Contact with foreigners only

contaminates and corrupts him. Western education and Western civilization are responsible for his degeneracy both in manners and morality.

*B. (A Government official and a supporter of the British policy.)* The degeneracy is not proved but merely assumed. I do not admit it. You argue from the particular to the general. Men of every race congregated in large cities show increased criminal tendencies, and you are considering only the town-bred native with whom you are best acquainted. You assume that the loss of servility means loss of respect for others, whereas it is only the first sign of the self-respect that is the only true basis of respect for others. If you study the ancient records, you will find the character of the native, before the advent of the European, was certainly no higher than it is to-day, and in many respects obviously lower. Western civilization, you must admit, is far ahead of Oriental civilization, and you cannot maintain that what is in itself good can have evil effects.

*A.* The Oriental does not take what is good from the West; he merely cultivates Western vices. The ravages wrought by the phylloxera, introduced with American vines into the vine-

yards of Europe, the terrible mortality amongst domestic animals in the zone of the Tsetse fly in Equatorial Africa, and the destruction of imported coffee plants in Ceylon by a parasite indigenous to the island, are instances of the danger of man's interference with natural conditions, and analogies of what inevitably happens in the moral sphere when two alien civilizations are brought into contact.

*B.* Your knowledge of the facts is, as I hinted before, imperfect. Study the criminal statistics of rural areas, and the native archives. What arguments can you adduce in support of a religion or system which tolerates such barbarism? The prohibitions of the national creed are in minor concerns followed with a Pharisaic ritualism, but in all that really matters it has no living force.

*A.* Do you suppose that you will improve matters by the introduction of Christianity? Less than two centuries have elapsed since Christians publicly tortured one another for their souls' salvation and burnt one another for the love of God. The Inquisition and slavery were found quite consistent with Christian doctrine.

*C.* (*A secularist who has listened with some*

*impatience to the turn the argument is taking.)*

The question is not between Christianity and Hinduism, Buddhism or any other dogma, but between ignorance and enlightenment. I am no advocate of missions, which seem to me to do more harm than good, except when they subordinate their evangelical to their educational work. On the main principles of education all are agreed. In matters of religion there is the greatest diversity of opinion and a great deal of intolerance. Let us limit education to the secular side with simple ethical teaching.

B. Surely you will admit that morality divorced from religion is cold and sterile? That is an axiom.

C. An axiom is a self-evident truth, incapable of proof. Your axiom is certainly *invident* of proof, but it is by no means a self-evident truth; in fact it admits of a very *simple refutation*. Your position is, I take it, *the ordinary* orthodox position that morality *must be taught* in connexion with a living creed, not *necessarily* Christianity. If, however, as you *do* hold, Christianity is true, then Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism and the rest must be false. And, indeed, Christianity embraces a score of conflicting creeds, which cannot all



be true. You have the doubtful authority of Plato for maintaining that a system of ethics can be based on "a noble lie," but these lies are by no means entirely noble, not even Christianity, which is *a priori* just as likely to be false as the rest. If morality is truth, it obviously needs no bolstering up by means of any fraud, however clever. The view you adopt lands you ultimately in a position of the most appalling pessimism. Either morality, which is truth in action, needs bolstering up by fraud because human nature is so hopelessly vile that the truth makes no appeal to it; or it is a system of lies, buttressed by superstition for the good of humanity. I should like to hear Carlyle's or Emerson's opinion on such a view. The fallacy underlying your beliefs is the fallacy which Pauline Christianity introduced to the world from the story of the Garden of Eden and the Fall: a fable which has been responsible for an incalculable amount of evil in the history of the Western world.

The missionary is naturally opposed to the separation of ethics from dogma, for he finds it easier to make converts from a rival creed than from agnosticism. Indifference, he argues, is the greatest foe of religion. Indifference to

what? one may ask. Are Shelley, Spencer, Meredith, Leslie Stephen, Mill, Swinburne to be classed with the indifferent? The indifference of these men was strangely akin to the enthusiasm of Wyclif and Luther, in whom the spirit of Modernism first appeared. It was to Bentham and the great rationalist and humanist writers that the opponents of the slave trade went for their arguments against the traffic which its supporters justified by scriptural authority.

It would be an interesting inquiry, but not possible here, to trace the confusion of thought which throughout Christian apologetics arises from the use of the word Christianity in two distinct senses: first the Pauline dogma, second the spirit of Christ's teaching. The one was the source of the Papacy, the Inquisition, and the religious warfare which stained seven centuries of the Christian era. The other is practically identical with the spirit of pure morality, which Socrates and Cato taught, which rationalists preach to-day and which is represented in part by every great religion, but completely by none; for all creeds in every age and clime tend to substitute faith and ritual for morality. To this spirit is due the credit of such

benefits as have been conferred upon humanity by Christianity, but the Church, thanks to this confusion of thought, has been able successfully to claim the credit for herself and her dogmatic teaching. But this is a digression.

The adherents of the policy of *laissez faire* are a motley crew, and it is one of the curiosities of Anglo-Indian life that the theory should have received such a degree of support from men most of whom owe everything to the education they received in England. One of this type, a very dark specimen of the Eurasian, in reply to the argument that what was so good for the European could not be utterly bad for the Indian, objected—

“But you surely don’t mean to compare us with the natives?”

“Indeed I do!” was the retort, *avec malice*; and the discussion abruptly closed.

It is less difficult to understand the objection to education of the merchant, who finds the educated native able to read market reports and to bargain for a good price, instead of selling his grain at whatever rate the shipper offers. But the facility with which men unthinkingly repeat a cant phrase is illustrated by the adherence to the view that education

is an unnecessary evil, of some whose opinions cannot possibly be dismissed as the vapourings of fools. A man who, to his credit be it said, has climbed the educational ladder from the London elementary schools, through the County Council secondary schools and Cambridge University, to the Indian Civil Service, should be the last to hold such views. His attitude may merely illustrate the tendency of climbers to kick down ladders. Or perhaps he feels that after all his education has not benefited him very much. But he cannot, even so, claim consistency of belief with conduct, if he is educating in England the offspring of his marriage with a native lady. Clearly the arguments against education for the native apply, with fifty per cent. of whatever validity they may possess, to the education of his children.

To a certain critical D.S.P. can only be attributed a desire to pose, or an idle prejudice. He should know better than most men the close connexion between illiteracy and crime. His fluent command of the native language and his entire lack of conventionality or social prejudices have enabled him, in the course of twenty-five years' intimate dealings with native men and women, to understand thoroughly the native

character in all its aspects. Possibly he fears that the progress of education may have the effect of reducing the police force, and his professional pride is touched.

Personal interest may perhaps tinge also the views of Antony the barrister; but it is more probable that his residence in Kamanago, which like all other great Eastern ports is a "sink of nations," and his profound ignorance of the native population in rural areas, conceal the truth from him. He shares the superstition that education is corrupting the Indian. It is a curious phenomenon that although, according to a familiar boast of lawyers themselves, the law is the apotheosis of common sense, the study of the law has often a fossilizing effect on its votaries. Lawyers are invariably on the side of orthodoxy in religious matters, and are prone to cherish quaint superstitions. They were the last among the educated classes to abandon the belief in witchcraft. A lawyer is by profession a High Tory. When he has imbibed radical principles before adopting the legal profession, his kaleidoscopic views are apt to bewilder the layman.

One of the ablest and most cultured barristers in England used to maintain that vaccination

as a preventive of small-pox was a delusion. This belief he absorbed from the atmosphere of a Nonconformist household before his legal studies made him acquainted with the value of evidence; but rather than modify his convictions, he preferred to accuse a learned and scientific profession *en bloc* of a conspiracy to promote a dangerous and fraudulent practice for the sake of paltry fees. He would go further than this, and with a passing allusion to his pride in the fact that a knowledge of science formed no part of his mental equipment, would assert that he had never heard expert scientific witnesses in court agree, and would deduce from such a limited experience the inference that modern science, and more especially bacteriology, was still on a level with ancient alchemy, and Pasteur, Koch, Ross and Bruce were not essentially different from or superior to Culpepper, who wrote the *Compleat Herbalist*. Every man has his blind side, no doubt; it is difficult to explain why a lawyer, whose work consists largely in sifting evidence, should be unable to apply his trained critical faculty to matters outside the purview of his own particular profession. Does the cause lie in his University training? Professor Ray

Lankester, following Herbert Spencer, castigates the neglect of science by the nation and the great Universities, and there is much justification for his strictures. It is noteworthy that when Thomas Hill Green, the great moral philosopher and fellow of Balliol, had erected on the basis of Kant's teaching an elaborate system of moral philosophy, he proceeded, not to inquire how far his system was consistent with the best ascertained facts and best supported theories of biology and psychology, but to spin a mystical interpretation of the Christian doctrine in the attempt to reconcile his conclusions with the orthodox State religion. The spirit of deference to the ancients, to which Roger Bacon and his greater namesake of St. Albans were supposed to have dealt a shrewd blow, and which Sydney Smith's wit was deemed to have killed outright, still survives in that "Home of Lost Causes" where young men are fitted with intellectual armour proof against the assaults of modern discovery and modern thought.

MY FRIEND THE EURASIAN



## CHAPTER IX

### MY FRIEND THE EURASIAN

“God made the white man,  
The Devil made the black man,  
Tommy Atkins made the Eurasian.”

—*Popular Philosophy.*

THE wise man who made this proverb for fools to quote saddled all three creators with terrible responsibilities. Tommy Atkins entered upon his task in a spirit of entire levity which foreboded an evil issue, and he has, in fact, produced one of India's greatest problems. The shortcomings of the Eurasian are a favourite topic with Anglo-Indians, and the whole tribe is condemned as useless. He is said to have the pride of the European without his energy, the indolence of the Asiatic without his philosophic content; he is voted a grumbler and a shirker. This generalization is so far true that the name Eurasian has acquired an evil conno-

tation. But all generalizations have exceptions; a generalization without an exception is a partial definition. The exceptions in this case are numerous, and they are Eurasians who have no need to be ashamed of their ancestry on either side and make no attempt to conceal their origin. Such men have risen and will continue to rise to high place in India. Socially they are regarded as no whit inferior to the white man and are welcomed in any society. The great Anglo-Indian families who, according to Kipling, would be the last to lose their hold on India, claim blood relationship with some of her noblest races. The original of the famous "Strickland of the Police" was the son of a pure Asiatic mother.

Has Europe produced so few mean and ignoble creatures, and Asia so few heroes and prophets, that the inferior Eurasian should desire to be recognized as a European and yearn to forget his Asiatic ancestors? Is it not likely that his faults are due quite as much to his European as to his Asiatic blood?

Of late the Eurasian has made an entirely commendable attempt to improve his social status. But he has gone the wrong way about it. He has started on the Sisyphean task of

elevating the whole mass. Archimedes undertook to move the earth, given a lever and a fulcrum. Had he done so the inhabitants would have been unconscious of any change. In England the condition of the working-man has for many years engaged the attention of philanthropists, who tickle his ears with University Extension Lectures on "The spacious times of great Elizabeth," or the symbolism of Ibsen, or the egotistical maunderings of Tolstoi; and occasionally a promising student is lugged out of the herd and sent to "Oxford College," where he soon learns the folly of wasting time in listening to lectures. But the sprinkling of rose-water is of little practical value as a cure for defective sanitation. A few of these enthusiasts have learned that the mass is made up of individuals, some of whom are capable of being elevated. "When you find a man of that sort," said one reformer, "drag him out and elevate him if you have to sell your shirt to do it. But make up your mind from the start that the mass is not to be elevated."

"First of all," said the Eurasian, "I must change my name. I will be an Anglo-Indian."

So he formed a union, and after much expenditure of breath, ink and paper, and the

thumping of many tubs, he induced the Government of India to recognize his new title and stamp it with official approval. The choice of name was unfortunate, for Anglo-Indian must now denote the Scoto-Burman, Hiberno-Pathan, Portuguese-Malay and Indo-American, as well as a host of other distinct hybrids. Meanwhile the Anglo-Indian is left shivering without a label, and must ponderously describe himself as a European temporarily resident in India. In the course of two years the new name has won little acceptance outside official documents. The Anglo-Indian clings to the old term and calls the Eurasian by his proper title. When "Anglo-Indian" has received general recognition as the proper term for a Eurasian, how much better off will the Eurasian be? The tiger-lily by any other name would smell as strong. In logical formula, terms identical in denotation must be identical in connotation: an elementary fact which the Government of India overlooked when it proscribed the term "native" for "Indian" in official correspondence.

It was by a change of character and not merely by a change of name that the apothecary became a surgeon, the usher became a school-

master, and the attorney—with the exception, according to his political opponents, of Mr. Lloyd George—became a solicitor. St. John's Wood became respectable without the intervention of the London County Council's Committee on street names, but Lower Tyrone Street is still an unfashionable quarter of Dublin in spite of its new title.

My Eurasian friend shares with his betters the false pride that leads a man to aim at reputation for what he is not, rather than esteem for what he is. The cornrake practises singing more assiduously than the nightingale; Signor Caruso doubtless prides himself on his heroic figure and irresistible fascination no less than on his marvellous voice; and Aspasia, the witty and beautiful companion of Socrates and Pericles, probably aspired, if truth were known, to be considered an authority on domestic economy. The average Eurasian, not content to be a good Eurasian and raise the credit of his breed, yearns for recognition as a pure Briton. His colour he attributes to long exposure to the rays of a tropical sun, or his mother's inconsiderate indulgence of a craving for coffee-berries at a time when ladies are given to whimsical tastes in the matter of food. He discusses the

enervating effects of life in the East and his own proneness to sunstroke, and talks of going "home" on furlough; thereby provoking the ribald to offer him his gharri-fare to the suburb of Crab Hill. Conscious that his speech bewrayeth him, for the "chee-chee" accent is as difficult to conceal as it is to imitate, he assumes one of the provincial accents of Great Britain, generally Lowland Scots, which is strong enough effectually to conceal any less barbaric intonation, and has many exponents in India to serve as models. Whence arise the euphemisms "a wee bit Scotch," "Mussoorie Highlanders," "Clansmen of the Nilgiris," and countless veracious histories of "Europeans" who wrote to the India Office to reserve accommodation in the London dak-bungalow, or proposed to ingratiate themselves with London society by giving a "station dinner" as soon as they landed.

There are, on the other hand, thousands of Eurasians rendering efficient service in commercial houses, Government offices and every department in the Empire. Many of them rise by sheer merit to the highest positions, and there is ample ground for hope that the effort now being made to train and utilize the pick of

the material more than in the past will be blessed abundantly, and so do much to solve a very urgent problem. The prejudice against the race is undoubtedly based to some extent on the Briton's half-concealed but wholly uneasy recognition of the fact that its very existence is a reproach to men of his own nation; and the knowledge that a similar, if smaller, crop continues to be sown for future reaping does not alleviate his embarrassment. Tirades against Eurasian inefficiency flow with greater frequency than good taste from the lips of men whose own "orphans" are roaming the bazaars or maintained by charity and Government aid. The feelings of such a man, if there remain to him any atom of self-respect and natural sentiment, are not to be envied when, in his retirement, he recalls the responsibilities he has evaded and reflects on the possible consequences of his neglect to boys and girls who have the right to call him father.

At Judgment one of his own race,  
As frail and lost as you, shall rise—  
His daughter, with his mother's eyes.

Chambers was a typically inefficient Eurasian. This individual had received a tolerable educa-

tion and obtained employment in the Subordinate Educational service. Together with his Scots name, he had assumed a Scots accent, and made it clear to all his acquaintance that he considered himself no unworthy scion of a famous family. Pendennis of the Staff Corps, landing at Lunsay, a riverside town to which he was posted as subdivisional officer, found Chambers standing on the bank of the river, and received from him an effusive greeting.

"Welcome to Lunsay, Captain Pendennis! You are a most valuable addition to the station."

"Oh! . . . er . . . how do you do?" replied Pendennis feebly, struggling to rescue a limp hand from the vigorous grasp of the stranger, "I'm afraid I've forgotten who you are."

"I don't think I've had the pleasure of meeting you before, sir. I am the headmaster of the Municipal school. You and I and the Assistant Superintendent of Police are the only Europeans in the station. Ah! There he is! I thought he would be sure to come down when he heard the steamer's whistle. We Europeans must hang together when there are so few of us. Up to now we have had a native S.D.O., and there have been just our two selves. Good-



evening, Watford. I was just saying to Captain Pendennis how glad we are to receive another European in the small but select society of Lunsay."

The three climbed the river bank together, the schoolmaster doing the honours of the place. He expatiated upon the advantages of its situation close to the railway as well as the river, and upon the facilities afforded by a daily service of trains and ferry-steamers in addition to a bi-weekly mail-boat. He depicted the glory of the sunsets reflected in the waters of the Pactolus, there more than a mile wide, and enlarged on the beauties of the great bend which the river makes at Lunsay, and the picturesqueness of the scene when the great mail steamers swept round the point and bore up to the ghat, or a fleet of native cargo boats, with swelling sails, floated majestically up stream, before the monsoon breeze, like a flock of gigantic swans. He showed the new Assistant-Commissioner the school, the maidan, and the municipal office, and pointed to the jesting notice inscribed in the vernacular over the front of the general store, where tinned provisions, patent medicines, oil, liquor and gramophones were displayed for sale.

On credit we'll sell,  
If all be well,  
To-morrow.  
You'll have to pay  
Cash down to-day.

Pendennis finally reached his bungalow, where his self-constituted escort left him to reflect on the characteristics of a type with which hitherto he had had little acquaintance. During the six months succeeding his arrival at Lunsay he had many opportunities of studying the specimen offered for his observation. Chambers displayed a constitutional lack of perseverance and application, and preferred more numerous requests for casual leave than the S.D.O., who was also President of the Municipality, considered consistent with the efficient discharge of his duties. When the midsummer vacation arrived the schoolmaster left by train for Kamanago, where he plunged with others of his kind into such gaieties and distractions as the capital affords. He returned to Lunsay with a gramophone of the most expensive make and a motor-bicycle, both obtained on the hire-purchase system. Before many weeks had elapsed the payments due were in arrear, and Pendennis began to receive inquiries from the tradesmen of Kamanago as to the feasibility of attaching

Chambers' pay. Eventually attachment warrants were issued and the unfortunate debtor began to pine and wilt visibly. He developed suicidal tendencies, which naturally sought realization in the yellow waters of the mighty river that, swollen with the monsoon rains, glided swiftly and smoothly past his very door. But the flood rejected him, and, caught by an eddy, he was washed ashore near the steamer-ghat, unconscious but still alive. On Pendennis devolved the damp and disagreeable duty of restoring the wretch by the orthodox methods prescribed for resuscitating the apparently drowned.

The shock, however, seemed to brace up the would-be suicide, and the watch which the Assistant-Commissioner kept on him was after a time relaxed. He owed his next escape to the dishonesty of a native servant, whom he had sent to the bazaar to purchase ten annas' worth of common white arsenic, on the pretext of preparing poisoned meat for rats. The servant bought two annas' worth of arsenic, which he mixed with four times the quantity of powdered chalk to conceal his theft of the balance of eight annas. A dose of this mixture merely made Chambers disgustingly sick.

Having failed in two attempts to leave the country by sensational methods, the schoolmaster now determined to try more commonplace means. He went off to Kamanago, where he related the story of his sufferings with such emotion as to engage the sympathy of a missionary, who undertook to assist him from charitable funds of which he had the disposal. A passage was secured on a British India steamer bound for Australia, and Chambers, after a moving farewell, sailed for the South with the blessing of his benefactor. Two days later the missionary received a letter from the steamship agents, stating that the young Eurasian for whom he had purchased a ticket had presented himself at their office and demanded a re-fund of the passage money. The captain of the steamer, said the note, reported that his passenger had insisted on being put on board the pilot-brig, in order to return to Kamanago by the next ship up the river.

For a little while Chambers disappeared from view; then there appeared in the *Daily Croak* an advertisement of Dr. Nema's pills, accompanied by a testimonial to the efficacy of the medicine signed by the ex-headmaster, with a portrait of the author in the margin. "Over-

work and anxiety," so ran this impressive document, "in connexion with my arduous duties as principal of the Lunsay Municipal School, had reduced me to the lowest depths of despondency. I could not eat or sleep, and I lived constantly on the verge of suicide. Fortunately for myself I was induced by a friend to try your invaluable pills, and after taking two boxes of them my health was completely restored."

This was his swan song, and it may be presumed that he obtained for it remuneration sufficient to buy him a dose of opium; for he was discovered a few days later, apparently asleep, in the waiting-room of the railway station at Crab Hill, and the evidence at the inquest showed that he had died from opium poisoning. At last he had been successful in something he had attempted; and his success was the reward of perseverance.

The type of mind which is deluded by the flights of imagination displayed in patent medicine advertisements must be singularly unsophisticated. Occasionally the agents who procure testimonials, signed by grateful convalescents, themselves become the victims of practical jokes. A sailor at Devonport sold to one of these rogues the following *tour de force*—

"Two months ago I had the misfortune during torpedo practice to fall down one of the tubes, spraining both my wrists. After I was discharged from hospital I suffered severely from rheumatism, and could scarcely use my hands. But after taking your pills for a fortnight I got rid entirely of the rheumatism, and I can now lift a twelve-inch shell in each hand without apparent effort."

The fragility suggested by the word "shell" deluded the proprietors of the potent pill, and the advertisement appeared in the local newspapers, until some Killjoy suggested that the weight of two twelve-inch shells, or seventeen hundred pounds, was rather beyond the capacity of even the most inveterate pill-taker, and the letter was withdrawn.

Gullibility is not invariably associated with simplicity of character, nor is it an uncommon accompaniment of dishonesty of purpose and moral depravity. For its root is in ignorance, and the shrewd but uneducated knave is often credulous and easily deluded in matters outside his own narrow scope. So it happens that Padgett, M.P., whose avowed honesty and inflexible devotion to the cause of truth has ever forbidden him to abstain from criticism of his

country when he conceives her to be wrong, and whose national modesty prevents him from praising her when she is right, becomes in India the tool of Babus and agitators who show him what he came prepared to see. He is typified by the old lady who eagerly accepted the story of the chariot wheels coming up on the flukes of the anchor at Suez, but rejected the description of flying fish as too obviously "a traveller's tale."

A man who has fought two Presidential elections in the United States cannot have failed to learn all the world has to teach of trickery, craft and shrewdness in political affairs, yet Mr. W. J. Bryan's opinions on the Government of India show him to be as incapable of seeing facts as the most self-righteous demagogue that voted himself four hundred pounds a year in the House of Commons. The mass of his countrymen, in spite of their proverbial acuteness, are equally prejudiced and misinformed. Even a well-read and charming American lady, discussing Bryan's articles, said—

"I suppose he is biased. England does not take anything out of India beyond the revenue, does she?"

A professor from Chicago seriously inquired

whether it was true that steamship companies registered in Indian ports had to maintain one Royal Indian Marine boat for every hundred steamers so registered; and whether the British India Steam Navigation Co. registered its fleet in Greenock so as to avoid the burden. He admitted that, having travelled in England, he could not conceive how such an impost would be accepted by a liberty-loving nation of Free-traders, and he seemed greatly relieved by the assurance that there was no arrangement which could serve even as the basis of such a fabrication. He was eager to promote better relations between England and America, and feared that statements of the kind would prejudice British credit in the eyes of his countrymen.

To counteract the misrepresentations of men of Bryan's stamp, there is no more effective agent than the American missionary who has been long resident in India. Many of these land in the East full of the hostility to the British that used to be taught in the American schools; but they do not, as a rule, fail to realize the fairness and generosity of a Government which subsidizes schools where their own version of Christianity is inculcated: a boon denied to



them by the Government of the United States. These men have done much to open the eyes of their co-religionists in recent years, especially since Spain and Japan shared with England the honour of being the traditional enemy. Their influence is fairly extensive. It is at any rate co-extensive in range with the influence of the American religious journals which spread much misinformation concerning the opium traffic and similar matters. A young American missionary, three months out from the States, shook his head very gravely as he remarked, "Our religious papers are taking up the opium question and I fear it may do England much harm in the eyes of the American people."

One felt inclined to murmur, "Panama!"

This enthusiast for righteousness had scarcely realized the complication of duties which confronts the statesmen and the impossibility of trusting solely to conscience in matters affecting millions of human beings. The gradual diminution of India's production of opium, coinciding with the revolutionary period in China, had little effect on the actual consumption, but transferred the profits from the coffers of the Indian Government to the pockets of the Chinese opium-grower and the smuggler. The immediate

devastation of the Indian poppy-fields and the closing of the Patna factory would not greatly have alleviated the evil, while it would have thrown on the Indian tax-payer a very heavy additional burden. The certainty of such a calamity to the Indian ryot was not to be faced merely in the hope, shown by recent history to be illusive, that the morals of the Chinaman would benefit. The purists who would have India divest herself immediately of all share in an immoral traffic should have emulated the abolitionists of 1833 and footed the bill. When they had done so and helped India to remove the mote from her eye, they might then have found time to occupy themselves with the beam in England's eye, represented by such trivialities as thirty millions of revenue from excise and a drink bill nearly equal to the national revenue.

## ON THE RIVER

## CHAPTER X

### ON THE RIVER

“A thousand suns will stream on thee,  
A thousand moons will quiver,  
But not by thee my steps will be  
For ever and for ever.”

—TENNYSON.

“Oh! that I saw its grains of yellow silt  
Roll tumbling in the current.”

—ARNOLD.

THE instant fascination exercised by the Pactolus was shown long ago by the loving care bestowed on the accounts of the river drawn up by Intelligence Officers who accompanied the early embassies to the court of Madepore. And to-day no globe-trotter considers her collection of mementoes complete, unless she can show a tea-spoon or a towel emblazoned with the badge of the Pactolus Flotilla Company. If one has lost a friend's address, the quickest and easiest way of finding

him, it is said, is to sit on a camp stool in Piccadilly Circus until he comes along, as he must surely do sooner or later. The steamer-landing at Madepore between the months of October and April is almost as good a spot for the same purpose, and in addition to being less crowded, offers a much drier and more enjoyable climate. Thither comes everybody of importance in the travelling world, and some others; Americans and English in equal numbers, an occasional German or Austrian, rarely a Frenchman; with a supercilious Government official to stiffen the mass and growl because he cannot have a cabin to himself.

The majority are travellers; that is to say they travel. They recall Horne Tooke's observation on the stick offered for his inspection by a wealthy acquaintance, who, having toured the globe in the days when Cook was not, and circular notes were unknown, was justly proud of the feat. "Sir," said this pioneer of foreign travel, "that walking-stick has been all round the world!"

The philosopher examined the stick carefully, then fixing his eyes upon the owner replied, "And it is still only a walking-stick after all!"

The average globe-trotter on the river appears

to be taking a rest-cure. He, or rather she—for ladies are vastly in the majority—never appears on deck before eight o'clock, and thus misses even a passing glimpse of the most interesting spot in the country. The site of five successive capitals, the earliest dating from the second century B.C., Manuhabad offers to the artist and the antiquarian larger opportunities than old Delhi itself. A commodious dak-bungalow has been erected for the benefit of travellers, but a visit to this delightful assemblage of ancient temples necessitates a break of journey and a walk of four miles from the landing place. Worse than that, the steamer arrives at half-past five in the morning, and rising at such an hour, even to avail oneself of the chance of a lifetime, is inconceivable. Therefore the traveller is content, on arriving on deck at eight o'clock, to be shown a dome just disappearing on the distant horizon, and turns with a yawn to the sixpenny magazine or cheap novel which forms her solace when she is not writing letters or picture postcards to friends at home. The only view that excites her interest is the busy, picturesque crowd covering the river bank wherever the steamer touches. These she "Kodaks" indefatigably, regardless

of the circumstance that their picturesqueness is entirely a matter of gaily coloured garments and ever changing groups, elements which are lost in a photograph. At other times she seems to be waiting with such patience as she can summon for the next meal to break the monotony.

Jam, which perhaps owes some of its popularity in England to the advocacy of one of her national heroes, is not a daily and universal article of diet in America, where the householder makes what she requires for home consumption. Its presence on the table at every meal on board except dinner excites the mild derision of the American traveller, who does not, however, conceal her appreciation of the delicacy.

"Guess I'll try some of those preserves while this boy's fetching my curry," said one.

"Pass it along, please," said the lady opposite when the first had helped herself.

"I think I'll try some too," said her neighbour.

"My! Don't that taste good?" ejaculated the first speaker.

"Bully!" replied number two.

"Glad I came!" chimed in the third.

Jam before curry sounds like a dietary solecism, but the Englishman and the American abroad frequently lay themselves open to the

criticism levelled by the Athenians at the Spartans, that outside their own country they observed neither their own customs nor any other. One otherwise estimable American tourist made it impossible for squeamish people to sit near him at breakfast, by pouring honey over fried eggs and bacon.

The oil-driller from the fields at Kerosine Creek is a frequent traveller on the mail-steamers. His art is one peculiarly American and commands high pay. His vagaries are those characteristic of his class in a country where drinking even in moderation has been elevated to the rank of a vice, and he needs frequent holidays to get rid of an excess of animal spirits and indulge his weakness. His holiday begins as soon as he sets foot on board. Leaving an order for beer with the ship's butler on his way to the upper deck, he seeks his berth and remains in decent obscurity most of the voyage. His presence is often made known only by the regular supply of long bottles to his cabin. His meals, if he appears at table, are selected rather with a view to neutralizing the effects of his potations than satisfying a normal appetite, and consist largely of Worcestershire sauce and pickles. In justice to him it should be added.



that he is rarely objectionable in his behaviour before other passengers, though half a dozen of his species in sole possession of the saloon during the slack season on the river may exercise the captain's tact and forbearance to the utmost. To some extent he is being displaced by the Canadian driller, who is more satisfactory and trustworthy, and holds rational views with regard to liquor.

The gloom which hangs over a shipload of globe-trotters is no doubt due to the lack of occupation and the unusual experience of being shepherded by a Cook's agent. Their absence of resource is illustrated by the books they read on board, the "fancy work" they leave about the deck, and the extent to which they "spread themselves on paper." They resemble a certain Hindu, who was accustomed to hawk sprays of peacock feathers at two annas each in the streets of the capital. Meeting one day an Englishman who offered to buy the whole of his stock, he handed over twenty bundles and received two rupees eight annas in exchange. He gazed in a perplexed manner first at the money and then at the feathers, and the purchaser inquired—

"Well? Is not that right?"

“Quite right, Sahib. But what am I to do for the rest of the day?”

Certainly one of the cheeriest parties ever encountered on the river consisted of the survivors of a group of thirteen—unlucky number—who arrived at Madepore, in charge of a courier employed by an American tourist agency, only to find that the agency had gone bankrupt and the courier's circular notes and drafts were worth just their face value in Confederate bills.

Nine of the party returned home by the cheapest route, but the remainder took a philosophic view of their misfortune.

“It will cost us,” they said to the courier, “nearly as much to go back as to continue our tour via Japan. You have got to make your way home somehow. Stick to us and see us through, and we'll pay your expenses.”

The courier agreed and the programme was carried out. When the four realized that they were now taking charge of the courier and were really rising superior to a difficult situation, they displayed a lightness of heart which made observers wonder whether after all Mark Tapley's jollity should not rightly be regarded as the direct outcome of the manifold trials that beset him.

The French or German traveller is rarely a mere tourist. He has usually scientific or political objects, and he does not confine his journeys to the cold season. One adventurous French doctor, with apparently no knowledge of English or any other language than his own, penetrated into China from Tonking, and after a long and perilous journey struck the head-waters of the Pactolus, and made his way on foot or by boat along the river into British territory, until he reached a station served by the Flotilla. A German, of equally adventurous temperament and better equipped linguistically, travelled from Peking across China, and scorning to avail himself of the Flotilla Company's services, except by purchasing stores from their steamers, bought a canoe and started down the river. He put in at every important town except one along the route, and was hospitably entertained by the British officials. The one exception was Parotabad, where Lewis was Deputy-Commissioner.

Lewis had himself some years before accomplished the journey across China, and was inordinately proud of a unique performance. It was represented to the German that the English pioneer over the route would scarcely view with enthusiasm the repetition by a foreigner of

a feat which was his sole title to fame, and that his hospitality could not be counted upon. Giving rein to their imagination, the traveller's hosts enlarged upon the almost despotic power possessed by the Head of the district and the facilities offered by the river for a sudden disappearance. Their dark hints were accepted in good faith, and one morning the captain of the mail-steamer, which left Parotabad at daybreak, overtook the German in his canoe many miles below the town. He had crept past before dawn by the light of a waning moon, hugging the eastern shore of the river so as to put two miles of water between himself and the sleeping Deputy-Commissioner.

Few of our foreign visitors share the views of Pierre Loti, who contemplates the British in India with an exaggeration of the feeling that inspires the British encountering the German tourist in Italy. Madame Alice S——, an Austrian writer and lecturer of repute, is an Anglophil with a firm conviction of the willingness of Englishmen to assist travellers. Her belief was severely tested on her fourth trip to the East, when she visited the Backwater and without servant faced the inconveniences involved in a journey to the historic ruins of the ancient

capital. On her return, in order to travel by the mail-steamer due down at daylight on Friday, she left Manuhabad on Thursday evening with a fellow-traveller whom she had met there and walked four miles to Yanago, intending to put up for the night at a small bungalow close to the ghat. The two arrived at the bungalow at dusk, but found their entry barred by an individual dressed in khaki, who assured them that there was no accommodation available, and directed them to an old, partly-furnished, rat-infested bungalow in the centre of the village. There they spent the long hours in discomfort, unable to sleep for the barking of pariah dogs and the noise of the countless rats on whose domain they had intruded. Madame's companion in distress, a Frenchman, seized the opportunity to impress her with his own views of the English. "They are willing to promise anything," he held, "but when it comes to performance they back out." His pessimistic view of the perfidious Briton received further confirmation when, on boarding the steamer at daylight, he found the berth which he had engaged in advance, occupied for the night by an English official, who had no intention of turning out at the early hour of five o'clock. With true philoso-

phy the travellers consoled themselves for their lack of sleep by watching the sunrise over Manuhabad, a sight which few have witnessed, and none having seen can ever forget. Incidentally it is the complete refutation of those critics who rebuked Mr. T—— K——, for reproducing in his beautiful water-colour drawings of the river an atmosphere which, they asserted, does not exist in the Backwater, but was imported by him from Egypt, where he had spent the previous winter.

At breakfast Madame S—— and her companion found themselves seated opposite an English acquaintance, to whom she related her experience at Yanago. The Englishman, jealous for his countrymen's reputation, asked her to describe the man who had turned them away from the bungalow.

"It was too dark to see his face," she said, "but he was dressed in khaki."

"Ah! That explains it," was the reply. "No Englishman wears khaki in mufti. It must have been a Eurasian subordinate official."

This explanation was received not merely with relief but with positive joy. Turning to her companion, the charming and vivacious little lady exclaimed—

“J'avais raison tout de même. Ce n'était pas un Anglais. Il n'y a que les half-castes qui fassent comme ça !”

Sir Felix S——, who served in his youth as an Uhlan in the Franco-Prussian war, and afterwards, migrating to England, rose to the highest eminence in the medical world, spent a cold weather in India after he retired from the active exercise of his profession. A gifted narrator with a keen wit and a wide knowledge of men and things, he became everywhere the centre of a merry group, and not less on the river steamer than in Mayfair. As one of the late King's physicians he possessed an intimate acquaintance with His Majesty's character, and one trait which he noted is worth recording.

“King Edward,” he said, “was unrivalled in tact and in knowledge of the world; and nothing pleased him better than to place his experience and insight at the service of his personal friends. These frequently sought his advice in difficult matters, and after careful consideration of the circumstances, the King would state his opinion. He was infallibly correct, and his advice could be followed to the letter with absolute confidence as to the event. The present King possesses all his father's

kindness of heart and shrewdness without his perfect urbanity." King Edward was trained in courts, King George at sea; the more bluff manner which is associated with the Navy is more likely to endear the reigning monarch to his British subjects than otherwise.

Sir Felix had the privilege of knowing Mr. Joseph Choate, the famous American ambassador, whose after-dinner speeches were frequently reported verbatim in *The Times*. Discussing him in conversation, he gave an example of his wit which was worthy of Talleyrand. An inquisitive person had put to him the embarrassing question, "If you had not been Mr. Choate, who would you choose to be?"

The ambassador turned to his wife and, with a courtly bow, said, "Mrs. Choate's second husband."

Mr. Choate possessed in a high degree the rarer gift of humour, which is in its essence an acute sense of proportion. So it is inconsistent with pessimism; for implicit in that doctrine is the arrogant premiss that our petty human affairs, as we view them, are of prime importance in the cosmic scheme. Thus the term "a saving sense of humour" becomes intelligible; but the phrase "humour of the



situation" is strictly inaccurate, for humour is not inherent in any set of circumstances, but is the result of a process in the percipient mind. The actors in a humorous situation are generally unconscious of their position, while wit is perfectly self-conscious. A tale of the great ambassador's illustrates this point, and provides further an excellent test for the existence of a sense of humour in the audience.

An American widow married a second husband, and by an unfortunate coincidence spent the early days of her second honeymoon in the same place and the same hotel where she had passed her first. At breakfast she poured out coffee for her husband, and poisoning the sugar-tongs over his cup with an absorbed and reminiscent air, said—

"Let me see, George, do you take sugar or not? I forget."

"I do take sugar," replied the husband, adding in an injured tone, "And my name is not George, but Charles."

The lady's attention was occupied for a few moments by the buttering of a piece of toast, a task which she pursued in the same absent-minded manner. She then took a bite, and having tasted it, said reflectively—

“It’s the same old butter, anyhow !”

An interesting experience befell Colonel M—— of the Indian Medical service, whose namesake wrote the famous collection of sketches entitled *Twenty-one Days in India*. It had never fallen to the Colonel’s lot to serve in the Backwater, and on the eve of his retirement he devoted a short holiday to a tour in the province. At Yanago two Government officers boarded the steamer in which he was travelling down the river. Missing one of them at dinner, he inquired of the other what had become of his companion.

“He landed at Sona about four o’clock.”

“His face seemed strangely familiar to me,” said the Colonel, “but I can’t locate him. What is his name ?”

“Traddles of the Accounts Department.”

“Is he a son of General Joe Traddles ?”

“That I can’t say, but I can tell you that he is a nephew of Sir Mortimer David of Afghan fame.”

“That’s it !” exclaimed the Colonel, “General Joe married Sir Mortimer’s sister. I served with him in my first station when he was aide-de-camp to his brother thirty years ago. This boy is his father over again.”

The all-conquering charm of the river never appealed to Colonel Carless, another member of the same distinguished service, who came to the Backwater at the very end of his career, when the land of regrets had wrought its full effect upon him and he was looking forward impatiently to his approaching retirement. His mind was a curious study. His scientific research had left untouched a childlike belief in tradition and authority, and it might be said of him, as of a greater man, whose name was to him anathema, "The fundamentals of Christian dogma are the only region in which his opinions have no history." His favourite boast was, "For five and twenty years I have taken no exercise that I was not compelled to take," and his figure attested the truth of his statement. He illuminated his conversation with apposite Biblical quotation, of which he had a store suited to any and every topic, giving it a delightful old-world flavour. He professed high Tory politics, and under a show of cynicism, which the eyes twinkling behind his spectacles belied, he concealed a warm heart.

His tours of inspection along the river were made by Government launch, and his work was so arranged that during the monsoon he travelled

in the dry zone. His last river-tour coincided with a burst of torrential rain such as often occurs in the dry zone at the beginning of the monsoon, driving him to abandon his tour and take three months' leave. He explained his hurried return to head-quarters thus—

“I could not get a wink of sleep at night, because the sarang, for sociability's sake, always tied up near a village on the pretext of taking in fuel and supplies, and the villagers sat up all night beating tom-toms and singing. Sleep was equally impossible in the daytime because of the noise of the engines and the incessant bawling of the Chittagonian crew. After I had endured nearly a week of this infernal torture, the rain began to come down in unending torrents. The last straw was the sight of water wheels, all along the river bank, pouring water upon land already flooded a foot deep. There was something so depressing in their superfluous activity that my overwrought nerves collapsed, and I felt I must abandon my tour or go mad. ‘Curse the river!’ I said. ‘If this is the dry zone, for Heaven's sake let us get back to the wet zone!’ So I put in at Wonuma and took the train back. I am off by the next mail home.”

Unpleasant associations destroyed for another scientific gentleman the golden memories which he anticipated from a cold-weather tour, free of expense, along the Pactolus and its great tributary. He was a geologist and mining engineer who had passed the greater part of his life in India, and after his retirement was accustomed to spend the winter on a small property he had purchased in Bengal. Of an undistinguished appearance in other respects, he was remarkable for a straggling unkempt beard—an unusual adornment in India—and the habit of wearing tan kid gloves all day long. It was his custom to sleep after each meal and during his sleep to grind his teeth in a manner distressing to hear. At the request of a coal-mining company he undertook to visit their works close to the river at Ginnilla where the upward mail ties up for the night. On the arrival of the steamer he went ashore intending to spend three days as the guest of young Freeman, the engineer in charge of the mine, and return by the next downward mail. But before one o'clock in the morning lights appeared on the river bank, and the coal expert was seen hastening back to the steamer in great and evident distress. He was assisted

down the steep bank by Freeman and his native servant, reiterating his determination to die on board. Inquiry revealed that after dinner and a cheerful evening with his hosts he had retired to bed about midnight. He had just taken off his boots when he trod upon a snake, which turned and bit him. A very natural suspicion on the part of the captain, who had been summoned to take charge of the dying man, was allayed by the evidence of the servant, vouching for the objective existence of the snake. But the reptile, though real, proved harmless, and at breakfast time the geologist was heard murmuring the words of the Psalmist, "I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord." Nothing, however, would induce him to go ashore again, and when he returned to Kamanago, he presented to the company a report which expressed his resentment for the sufferings he had undergone. The three main points of this document were—

1. The coal was of very inferior quality such as no sane person would use.

2. The cost of working and transport was too high to make the venture profitable, even if fools were found to purchase the coal.

3. The engineer in charge was a frivolous

person of ribald conversation, who ought to be replaced by a God-fearing man.

There is one person who is frequently seen on the river, though rarely encountered, and that is my esteemed friend Thomas Atkins. His travels are undertaken not as the outcome of an inquiring or adventurous spirit, but at the bidding of a cheese-paring and unimaginative Staff Office. The Government is the unhappy possessor of a fleet of river steamers, for which work must be found. The pick of the fleet is a paddle-steamer, captured from a native potentate thirty years ago. With a couple of flats in tow she can to six knots up stream in the low-water season to go. When the river is high, she is frequently compelled to anchor one flat, at the points where the current is strongest, tow the other up stream for a mile, anchor that, and return for the first one. There is only one cantonment in the country which is not on the railway, but all except one are also accessible, though at leisure, by river. From Kamanago to Shikarabad is a journey of thirty hours by rail, but may easily occupy a month by river. When the winter manœuvres take place, the first regiment to reach the scene of operations spends a month waiting for the

arrival of the last, because the river transport is inadequate. In time of war the fleet would meet the fate which befalls many officers on the outbreak of hostilities; it would be retired, the fast boats of the Flotilla Company would be commandeered, and the services of the railway utilized. Though it is in no sense a preparation for war, the system in time of peace has one advantage: it offers the Staff Office an incomplete solution of the eternal problem, "What can we find for Mr. Atkins to do?"

It has also another and graver aspect. The *Daily Croak* not long ago printed a paragraph from its Mangopore correspondent, stating that a detachment of the Royal Ulster Fusiliers had arrived there on the previous Monday for musketry training; the voyage from Kamanago against the heavy stream occupied ten days; one man rolled overboard in his sleep at Mutchelpore and was drowned. The facts concealed by this innocent-looking paragraph were these. The steamer left Kamanago carrying specie and towing two flats full of troops. Their journey lay through fever-stricken swamps, where the very cattle are protected from mosquitoes, and where houses for Europeans are fitted with mosquito-proof shut-



ters of perforated zinc. The district is notorious in history as the scene of numerous suicides during the first British expedition, when the troops, tortured to madness by the poisonous insects, shot themselves with their own muskets. Yet at the present time, when every school in the country is supplied with Colonel Ross's chart emphasizing the dangers of mosquito-bite and describing the best means of suppressing mosquitoes; when the medical services are engaged in a truceless war against them, and the dangers of sleeping without mosquito-nets are continually insisted upon, white men are compelled to pass night after night, in one of the most malarious tracts in the whole world, exposed defenceless to the assaults of the little pests. The statement that one man rolled overboard in his sleep is a piece of unconscious irony. Such sleep as the men got was snatched during the day in a hot and heavy atmosphere. The horrors of the night were punctuated by curses with an occasional shriek when the nerves of some unfortunate wretch gave way under the strain. Two men threw themselves overboard to put an end to their torment, and only one was recovered. Another unhappy sufferer was put ashore at Batakpore demented.

It says much for the discipline and fortitude of the British Army that no murmur was heard from the men against these totally unnecessary hardships. The detachment might have reached Mangapore by train and ferry steamer in fifteen hours from Kamanago. It is not clear why the Royal Army Medical Corps, which is responsible for the health of the troops, should have no power to veto transport arrangements so plainly insanitary, irrational and cruel.

## OUR VILLAGE

## CHAPTER XI

### OUR VILLAGE

“A long, straggling, winding street at the bottom of a fine eminence, with a road through it always abounding in carts.”

—MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

OURS is a hill-station ; not one like Mount Abu, or Pachmarhi or Maymyo, which bear to a real hill-station the ratio which a soda cooled in a cradle of wet straw under the verandah bears to one that has nestled for an hour in an ice-chest, cheek by jowl with a block of ice ; but a hill-station where we have fires in the evening, frost in the cold weather, and strawberries eight months in the year. It is not, however, on the railway, and has no tonga service, so that brass-hats are not endemic or even epidemic, though they occur sporadically in years when the Viceroy visits the province, or the Governor thinks it is time for the light of his portly presence to shine upon the hill-tribes, who lead a peaceful life, little to their

liking, under the ægis of the British *raj*, here represented by Paisley, most delightful of Residents. Paisley, like his predecessor, Sir George Stretton, is an uncovenanted civilian, and one of the many who lend solid support to the advocates of selection in lieu of competitive examination. Sir George spent more than half his service in the hills, and by his firmness, courage and readiness to assume the responsibility for prompt and vigorous action, early acquired a deservedly high reputation. In the days following the annexation of certain frontier tracts, he, as political officer accompanying the column that penetrated to the farthest limits of the newly acquired territory, pluckily sanctioned a raid on the retreats of a tribe of head-hunting savages beyond the frontier, thus inspiring them with a wholesome and lasting terror of the suzerain power and vain repentance for the murder of Imperial officers and unoffending neighbours.

Characteristically, it was Bibi, a young and dainty native princess, who first comprehended the permanence of British rule and the uselessness of opposition. She was a widow with an infant son, whose patrimony she administered during his minority. Her brother was

the principal native chief in Sir George's jurisdiction, and prime-mover in a plot to murder the Resident at a Durbar to which all the chiefs were summoned. Bibi was taken into the confidence of the conspirators and immediately perceived the futility of their design. She foresaw that the murder of the Resident would merely result in the appointment of a successor with wider powers and a stronger force of troops at his disposal, and would involve her countrymen in much bloodshed and many calamities without the smallest hope of profit. The inexorable grip of Great Britain would certainly not be relaxed, and even if it were, the country would merely fall into anarchy. Perhaps her feminine intuition was sharpened by her respect for the Resident's courage and courtesy, and her personal regard for him. However that may be, she asked for a private interview with him and exposed the plot.

Sir George received the disclosure with his customary imperturbability, thanked her for her loyalty and the proof of her devotion to his personal welfare, and took no overt action to prevent the consummation of the conspiracy. The day of the Durbar came, and in full uniform the Resident with his escort proceeded to the

Durbar-hall, where the chiefs were already assembled. Before taking his seat he stationed a Sikh orderly, armed with a Webley revolver, behind the chair of Bibi's influential brother, ringleader of the plot, and said—

“If you see a move in my direction, kindly blow a hole in this gentleman for me.”

These preliminary arrangements settled, the Durbar proceeded without a hitch.

Young, attractive, a widow, and practically supreme in her own little state, Bibi naturally became the heroine of many adventures. At the Delhi Durbar of 1902 she attracted the attention of all observers by her graceful riding, an unusual accomplishment for a princess in India. She tempers her national religion with a lively faith in Nature-spirits and a keen sense of humour. Returning from a tour of various Buddhist shrines, including the temple at Kandy, where she worshipped the sacred tooth, she met an English acquaintance to whom she described her wanderings.

“Why did you visit all these places?” he asked.

“To worship the holy relics,” she replied.  
“Don't you worship at any shrine?”

“No; what is the object of it all?”

“Well, what do you expect will happen to you when you die?”

“For the matter of that, what will happen to you?” was the Englishman’s retort.

“Oh! I shall become a princess in Spiritland.”

“Not a bit of it!” laughed her friend. “You will become an ordinary Brownie, living in a banyan tree and frightening the villagers who pass it by night.”

This rejoinder tickled Bibi, and she mirthfully inquired—

“Do you know what happens to Hindus when they die? They become lumps of coal and are used for stoking up the fires down below!”

After thirty years of British protection romance still lingers in these hills, uncorrupted as yet by Indian codes and all the unsavoury horde which the law brings in its train. The age is still the age of Haroun al Raschid, and the chiefs dispense justice in patriarchal mode. A concourse of thirty thousand people assembled for the celebration of a four days’ festival is kept in order by a dozen of the ruler’s bodyguard, backed by the presence of their chief himself. The scenery lacks the grandeur of the Himalayas, but the wide rolling downs, the deep valleys,



and the pine-clad hills, bathed in the soft blue light of a tropical winter morning, fill the heart of the exile with an emotion that is half pure joy in the contemplation of perfect beauty, half regretful memory of the sight of Devonshire moors or Sussex downs in the tender light of an English September sun. On his dreaming ear there falls the soft musical sound of a distant, deep-toned bell, recalling flower-strewn Alpine pastures and grazing cattle with their wooden *cloches*. The sound grows clearer and nearer, and presently there appears round the shoulder of the hill a caravan of pack-bullocks, with wide-sweeping horn and rolling gait, led by a sober old ox, who bears on his saddle a heavy bell of bronze, emblem of his leadership. Through the dust which the level rays of the early sun convert with divine alchemy into a shower of golden spangles, the train winds slowly down the path, crosses the bridge that spans the dancing stream, and traversing the narrow valley, enters a dense bamboo-clump and is instantly lost to view. Even so in the days of the good caliph did the heavily-laden pack-animals of the Band of Forty Thieves disappear into the cave before the astonished eyes of Ali Baba.

A few of the hill-chiefs have learned by association with Europeans something of British social customs, but others are as ignorant as they are curious in this regard. The Prime Minister of a small State, desirous of paying polite attentions to a medical missionary who had rendered to his household professional services, asked him and his family to dinner. The missionary accepted with some qualms, and tried in vain to conjecture what strange experience lay in store. On the morning of the fateful day the minister sent his servant with a message, explaining that he was distressfully ignorant of the way in which a table should be set out for dinner, and requesting them to send their own servant with table linen and cutlery to make arrangements in accordance with their custom and desires. This message aroused fresh apprehensions in the minds of the guests as to the probable nature of the entertainment, but their fears were allayed by a second message later in the day. The minister had further considered the matter, and anxious lest his cook might not be able to furnish forth such a repast as he would desire to set before so distinguished a company, suggested that the missionary's cook should provide and prepare

the meal, presenting the bills to their host. The missionary complied with this request, feeling that the situation, though unconventional, had redeeming features; they ran no risk of indisposition from eating strange and fearful dishes. At dinner-time they proceeded to the house of the minister, who warmly welcomed them, and after a few minutes' conversation led them into an inner room, where a table was laid. At their host's request they seated themselves and dinner was served. The minister and his family, distrusting their own capacity to cope with a European menu, had already dined, and looked on in respectful but observant silence, while the embarrassed guests ate the dinner which their own cook had prepared.

The station itself tends to become, like other head-quarters of British rule, an epitome of the Indian races. There are Gurkha and Sikh police, Bengalis, Mohammedans of Hindustan, Madrasis in Government employ, Panthay muleteers, Chinese traders, Pathans, and representatives of half a dozen hill-tribes. Inside the boundaries of the civil station, which is technically a "proclaimed area," the Indian penal code runs, and unluckily runs counter to the habits

and notions of the heterogeneous collection of humanity gathered here in the common hope of gain, and afflicted by the common vice of Orientals, a love of gambling. For the most part a friendly arrangement with the police and the application of a *douceur* at suitable intervals enable John Chinaman to enjoy his favourite excitement without offence to decorum. But there are occasions when John considers that immunity should be conceded without payment. When Ah Sin's mother died, the bereaved son thought that a night's fantan was an integral part of the funeral ceremonies, and declined to make over the usual percentage of profits to the policeman, who accordingly reported to Newcastle, the District-Superintendent, that gambling was going on in house number sixty-nine in the Chinese quarter. Newcastle, without inquiry, impulsively wrote an order for the arrest of the house-owner, and gave instructions that it was to be carried into effect immediately. Armed with the warrant, a couple of policemen set out to arrest Ah Sin. But the heathen Chineese was equal to the occasion. Half an hour later, to the beating of gongs and wild cries, a motley procession moved slowly to the court-house, with two crestfallen con-

stables at their head, and deposited the bier at the door of Newcastle's office.

"This, sir," explained the constables, "is the owner of the house."

Twice a year the station is filled to overflowing by the assembly at head-quarters of all the political and military officers in the huge area under the Resident's control, with a sprinkling of visitors from the plains, and a "Week" takes place. The Indian week, like the English week-end, is an elastic term. It may denote any period of time from three to twelve days. Its connotation is almost equally vague. A polo tournament, a race-meeting, a tennis tournament, a club dinner, a couple of dances, a "gaff," private dinners and bridge-parties, and late nights are all comprised in the idea of a week, but none of these except the last is absolutely essential. There are many stations in the hills as ill-suited by nature as Simla for racing and polo, or even tennis, and without the money which enabled Simla to remedy Nature's lack of consideration for British love of sport. With three or four Europeans in such a station the advent of another couple of cheery souls is excuse enough for a Week of four or five days, the ingredients thereof being dinners, bridge or

poker, and late nights. Our semi-annual gathering is on the most ambitious scale, save in one respect; we do not hold our race-meeting under C.T.C. rules. It may be technically irregular, but the running is straight, and there are no "bookies" or "welshers." Our gentleman-riders may casually forget to weigh in till they have already begun to dress, then remembering their oversight, trot round to the weighing-tent with a miscellaneous armful of saddlery and get on to the machine without a word of protest from the clerk of the scales; but the course is not strewn with shed weight-cloths as Kamanago's race track is said to be, contrasting with another road leading to the same destination, but paved only with good intentions.

Our stewards include Fayth of the P.W.D., one of the finest polo players in the country, an unrivalled host and a perfect sportsman; and Ryder, an Irishman from the Orkneys, famous for his imperturbable good humour and his supreme *insouciance*. These qualities, combined with a very imperfect knowledge of compound addition, marked him out as the most appropriate man to run the totalisator, which was instituted at our latest meeting to satisfy the demands of the indigenous gambling spirit. Ryder's

services were of course quite honorary, but his sporting instinct, with rare good fortune, brought him in quite a comfortable profit on the second race. In a field of six ponies all except one had received more or less support from the backers, and when Ryder was closing the book as the flag fell, he put a solitary rupee on the neglected pony out of sheer sympathy. The impossible happened, and the dark horse got home by half a length, winning for Ryder the whole amount staked on the race, less the usual commission to the fund.

The next race, a polo scurry for animals played in the tournament, produced an "incident." Maclentie of the police was starter, and Garvin of the political service was entrusted with the second flag to notify false starts. Garvin's knowledge of the rules of racing was not quite commensurate with his enthusiasm, and his interest in his own pony did not add to his qualifications for the position he was filling. Some trouble was experienced at the post, for which Garvin's pony was mainly responsible, but Maclentie finally dispatched them in a bunch just as the chief offender slewed round and faced the starter. Garvin saw his pony left at the post and rushed down the course waving his flag wildly, like an heroic platelayer trying

to stop an express rushing on to destruction. But the jockeys had all seen the flag fall and refused to be checked. Garvin, by a display of agility of which nobody dreamed him capable, saved his neck just as he seemed certain to be ridden down. He then rushed up to MacLentie, protesting excitedly that the race must be run again, the start was a false one, and so on. MacLentie, almost equally excited by Garvin's display of ignorance, endeavoured in vain to explain the duties of the second flag, and Fayth's urbane influence alone averted a quarrel. A week later Garvin was still unconvinced of his error, and no doubt thinks to this day that he was "got at."

The last race of the day was "over the sticks" at catch weights, post entries being accepted. Ryder's pony, ridden by his syce, had already competed unsuccessfully in three races, and his jockey, thinking they might as well "make a day of it," entered him for the hurdle-race without Ryder's knowledge. With characteristic carelessness the Punjabi who had undertaken the preparation of the jumps had faced them the wrong way, so that the wings were on the far side and there was nothing to prevent the ponies from running wide. Evening was drawing



on before the race was started, and in the fading light the green bamboos with which the hurdles had been filled were almost indistinguishable from the turf. The ponies rushed in a compact phalanx at the first hurdle; one or two made an attempt to jump, but the majority simply ran over it and several animals came down. The Murderer—as Ryder's pony was called from an exploit which just failed to end in the death of a lady he was carrying—ran wide. His jockey turned him round, and reaching the jump again, found judges, starter, owners and jockeys gathered round a native rider who had been extricated unconscious and badly injured from the kicking and plunging mass. The Murderer was put at the fence, part of which his jockey had set up again, and went round the course alone. As he neared the winning post, Ryder, who, up to that moment, was unaware that his pony was entered for the race, looked up at the sound of galloping hoofs and touched one of the judges on the arm.

“By Jove! I believe that's the Murderer finishing alone!”

The judge, whose sight was better than Ryder's, confirmed his conjecture, and awarded him the stakes.

The breezy absence of formality which enables a casual visitor to feel at once that he is not in Simla or Ootacamund, marked the dance that wound up the festivities of the Week. An honoured guest was the local Rajah, a genial old soul, much married but childless, who had learned in years of adversity tolerance and worldly wisdom, without losing any of his inborn kindliness of heart. He was requested to take in to supper a lady whose knowledge of the vernacular was limited to the amount forced upon her by the management of half a dozen native servants. Unabashed and unimpeded by the phrases and formulæ prescribed in addressing men of high rank, she plunged into such conversation as her vocabulary permitted, unconsciously shocking the ears of His Highness with the colloquial familiarities of the stable. The benign old gentleman perceived the lady's predicament and appreciated the comic side of the situation, which suggested to him reminiscences of a former Governor.

"Sir Alexander," he said, "arrived in the province totally ignorant of the language and set himself at once to learn it in the form used at Court. All other forms he eschewed as

being low and unfit for the lips of a gentleman of high position. The result was that he called his servant or spoke of his dog in the elaborate ceremonial phraseology restricted by custom to conversation with or concerning kings and priests. To his servant he would say, 'Graciously condescend to approach,' and of his dog, 'His Excellency Pompey has deigned to leave the room.' "

Neither the point nor the substance of these anecdotes was intelligible to his fair partner, but the amusement displayed on the faces of the other guests at the table aroused her suspicious curiosity, and her right-hand neighbour translated. Still her peace of mind was unbroken, for it was not until a candid friend explained the position later that she understood the Rajah's delicate rebuke.

Douglas, who had come for his semi-annual relaxation at head-quarters from a lonely outpost distant a fortnight's journey, was making the most of his opportunities. After supper he confused his hostess with a lady of mixed ancestry, and being apprised of his blunder retired in shame to the refreshment-room, where he had already spent a good portion of the evening. There he encountered the new padre, a

fine specimen of muscular Christianity, who bade him be of good cheer and not take his mischance too seriously to heart. He begged the padre to escort him back to the ball-room; and forgetting on the way thither both why he had left it and why he was returning on the arm of the padre, conceived the notion that he had undertaken the duty of introducing the new arrival to the residents. He had presented to several people who had previously made the padre's acquaintance, "My friend the ecclesiastical gent," before he encountered his wife's eye fixed upon him with baleful glare. He wilted and suffered himself to be led back to the refreshment-room, there to dissipate the gloom which again temporarily clouded his spirits. When, however, the time came to bid his hostess good-night he had quite recovered his buoyancy. He walked home with Paisley, soberest and most dignified of men, who was his host for the week; and feeling that on such an occasion good breeding forbade him to permit the intrusion of official rank upon their relationship as host and guest, jovially suggested a nightcap.

"Just one more peg before we turn in, old boy! By Jove! What a treat it must be for

your servants to see you come home sober for once during a Week ! ”

Here Mrs. Douglas' voice was heard from their chamber adjoining the verandah, vetoing in politely frigid tones the opening of any more soda, and an immediate adjournment took place. Douglas' subdued manner on the following day may not have been entirely due to the curtain-lecture he was suspected of having received.

But, alas ! this memorable Week is already history. The railway threatens us and the days of our Arcadian simplicity are numbered. Already the embankment is visible peeping out at intervals amongst the foothills, like the back of some monstrous snake that writhes its loathsome way to the inmost recesses of our mountain home ; and the dull report of the dynamite that scars our beauteous hill-sides sounds like the distant guns of a relentless foe, creeping slowly but unceasingly upon us. Forty miles away a second Mussoorie has been laid out, and already the virgin crags give back the intolerable accent of the railway staff, the advance guard of a horde of Nilgiri Highlanders. The tribesmen, content till now to grow grain for their own use, and to weave on hand-looms their beautiful silk or cotton garments of exquisite madder,

indigo, and most delicate greens, shall hereafter cultivate wheat and potatoes for export, that with the profits of their labour they may buy cheap aniline-dyed silks from Halifax and Bremen, or re-purchase, in the form of Scotch whisky distilled in Hamburg, the produce of their own fields.

## SOCIETY IN THE BACKWATER

## CHAPTER XII

### SOCIETY IN THE BACKWATER

“For where  
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent  
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare ? ”

—ROSSETTI.

“I had not known sin, except through the law.”

—ST. PAUL.

IF, as I have dared to suggest in the Preface, called in books printed on hand-made, deckle-edged paper the Proem, and by the novelists of the Kail-yard the Foreword, you, gentle reader, have sometimes spent an afternoon on a Thames backwater with a congenial companion, you will know that a backwater is the natural place for indiscretions. Should you not have learned that, let me advise you to confine yourself for the future to the main stream, and leave the backwaters to those who can appreciate them and utilize the oppor-



tunities they afford. If these indiscretions of mine at times appear too glaring, remember that a residence of twenty years in a backwater is apt to confuse notions of discretion and propriety.

You will not find the Backwater on the map. If you recognized it you would probably say, "Oh, I know all about this country," and proceed airily to quote extracts from the numerous books written by globe-trotters spending a cold weather in the East, or artists with a commission from a firm of publishers and introductions to everybody of importance in the province. And then you would not buy or borrow this little book of mine; and you would be wrong. For whereas they retail as truth the wildest flights of which the imaginations of their hosts are capable, I do not pretend for a moment that there is the slightest foundation in fact for the many tales narrated in this volume.

When we of the Backwater, whose morals are no better than they should be, find the globe-trotter or literary traveller delivered into our hands, we fill his mind with store of beautiful fictions and gloat with joy over them when, clothed in picturesque language, they duly

appear in print. Those who come out to share the exile of a father or brother we take to our hearts and cherish as one of ourselves; but towards the others we feel the same resentment which must inspire the animals at the Zoo towards those who come to gaze at them in their captivity.

One very self-complacent artist spent a year with us at free charges, painted many pretty pictures and absorbed many romantic stories full of that circumstantial detail which lends verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative. When his book appeared it was greeted by the *Athenæum* in something like the following terms: "The *Athenæum* is a weekly journal devoted to literature and art. Mr. Jones-Brown's book is neither literature nor art." But by that time Mr. Jones-Brown had drawn his cheque and was busy in Japan, making notes and inhaling the local atmosphere for another book.

In spite of all that has been written about the Backwater, it is still comparatively unknown. Even the *Spectator* comes to grief when it ventures on references to its customs. And where the *Spectator* errs, what mere mortal can hope to avoid error? But it is not the object of

these papers to correct popular delusions, more especially since that would involve a confession of the geographical position of the Backwater.

Visitors to the Backwater note in our manners what they politely call "a delicious frankness"—a euphemism adopted by Americans to describe the English habit of calling the male of the cow "a bull" instead of "an ox," and of using "leg" in preference to "limb." This candour is the joint product of several causes. The Civil List publishes every official's pay and his place in the Table of Precedence, and the History of Services gives the date of his birth, so that his enemies can calculate his age and his friends can send him birthday presents; unless he be a member of the Indian Civil Service—abbreviated in this land of initials to I.C.S.—in which case only the date of his joining the Service is given. Hence the term "Heaven-born," sarcastically applied by Jealousy to the Civilian, who is not born like other mortals, but graciously condescends upon India from above. A military officer's pay is inferred from his rank, and his age may be calculated from the date of his first commission, furnished by the Army List. It is strictly in accordance with native ideas of etiquette to inquire of your host

or hostess when paying a call, "How old are you? What is your pay? How many children have you? Are you married?"

The age and pecuniary circumstances of our budding merchant princes might be wrapped in the mystery which enfolds the financial operations of their seniors, were they not led by the example of those whose secrets are published to the world, to reveal details which in England it is considered almost indecent to discuss. The consequences of this brutal frankness on the part of official publications, coupled with an equal frankness in the discussion of private affairs at the club, is a cynicism in the calculation of prospects of promotion and increased pay, and in the avowal of aims and objects, quite inconsistent with the traditional hypocrisy of the British character. The absence of any public interest of a very absorbing nature brings personal and private interests to the front; and the climate, by restricting during a great part of the year sports and occupations which require the expenditure of much energy, tends to produce mental irritability; so that women especially are prone to quarrel over trivial questions of precedence and the rules of auction bridge.

From the undue prominence given to private

interests arise those petty scandals which have led to a belief, almost universal in England, that Anglo-Indian society is more corrupt than English society of the same rank. The truth is probably quite the reverse. The entire lack of concealment in a country where every European is known and all his actions marked and discussed, where life is lived in public and there are no Pullman-car trains on Sunday to Brighton, is a powerful incentive to good conduct. Even an elopement in low life may become the subject of a newspaper paragraph, through the intervention of inquisitive friends. The *Kamanago Herald* of Saturday, June 9, 19—, contained the following announcement:—

#### DOMESTIC OCCURRENCE.

##### MARRIAGE.

F. A. Quick, Esq., Surveyor, has just arrived from Madepore with Miss F. Park, and they are leaving for Kabazabad on Tuesday to be married on Saturday, June 23.

Young Lothario appears to have taken umbrage at this raising of the curtain on his little romance, and on the 18th a paragraph in the same journal stated that "A young Eurasian, on his way from Madepore to Kabazabad to get married, tried to commit suicide by swallowing tincture of iodine. He has been treated

in hospital and is now on the way to recovery."

If every lapse from the thorny path of virtue in England were known, exaggerated and discussed as it is in India, Anglo-Indian society would forswear England for ever, and wrapping itself in its own virtue—a garment of light texture, suitable for hot climes—retire to Simla or Mussoorie.

It is in the Eveless Eden of the up-country station that candour reaches its highest development. Here, where men alone do congregate in the evening at the club, the topics of conversation are almost exclusively "the three P's"—Polls, Promotion and Pay. For the native ladies of the Backwater are not without charm, and enjoy a freedom allowed to their sex in very few parts of the globe. It is not unusual, therefore, for a man who is deprived of the society of his own kind for many months together, to seek local compensation. From time to time the "unco' guid" get wind of these irregular alliances and feel called upon to invite the attention of Government to their existence. Then Government, with its eye upon Exeter Hall (in these days converted into a cheap hotel to balance the metamorphosis of the Aquarium into a Wesleyan basilica), issues a circular, styled on

## An Eastern Backwater

the *lucus a non lucendo* principle Confidential, requesting heads of departments to inquire into the morals of their subordinates. A series of strong hints results in the conversion of many such alliances into marriages after the European fashion. In these days of universal scepticism, when even the English marriage laws are under revision, it is refreshing to find any class of men with so touching a faith in the perfection of British customs, involving as this faith does a whole-hearted repudiation of the doctrine that morality is largely a question of latitude.

One objection to these irregular connexions is that they encourage the perversion of justice, because a native mistress is disposed to accept bribes from her countrymen, and to use her influence to promote the interests of the briber. The clear implication is that marriage has the effect on a native mistress of either reducing her influence or increasing her honesty. It is difficult to believe that those who inspire the circulars are either cynical enough to accept the former or childlike enough to maintain the latter alternative. Officers in the Commission who marry native ladies are almost invariably transferred to the judicial branch. What inference is to be drawn from this act is not quite clear.

The unconvicted prisoner is entitled to the benefit of the doubt, and credit for honourable motives may be allowed to those who attempt to enforce Christian morality at the expense of their fellows. But surely it was a little inquisitorial to demand information concerning the antecedents of the native ladies who had married officials, especially as to whether they had been the mistresses of their respective husbands before marriage. It is at least doubtful whether details of pre-nuptial frailty were supplied. No self-respecting officer could deign to obtain or forward such information. It is less doubtful that any person furnishing it would render himself liable to an action for damages on the ground of libel. Some candid friend, perhaps the Government Advocate, may have enlightened the authorities on the legal aspect of the inquiry. However that may be, no new circular has issued on this vexed question for more than ten years, and it is unlikely that it will be raised again. It is one which must be settled by public opinion.

Where there is plenty of European society to prevent the deadly monotony that induces men to prefer the companionship of a native woman to solitude, no trouble arises. As the European



population increases, the difficulty diminishes and tends to disappear. The effect of the various circulars has been admittedly unfortunate, for they have merely tended to replace a permanent but easily dissolved relationship, which required tact and forbearance on both sides, by a more casual and very temporary union or an ill-assorted marriage. A compliant mistress, confirmed in her position by a legal ceremony, is apt to become a shrewish and truculent wife. More than one officer in the Commission is alleged to have been refused promotion to the highest grade in the administrative branch because his native wife was suspected of corruption. Exeter Hall would have been more usefully occupied in promoting a bill to enact the illegality of mixed marriages than in forcing them on unwilling Benedicks.

This is a thorny subject, and no decision can be reached offhand. But there are certain considerations very obvious to Anglo-Indians, though far from being admitted in England. The view that chastity is the chief virtue in woman, but not so essential in man, is a selfish masculine view which does not win quite universal acceptance. The Christian conception of marriage also does not prevail throughout the world.

Even in Europe there are thousands of virtuous and thoughtful people who maintain that marriage is essentially a civil contract which has been elevated to the rank of a sacrament by a priesthood desirous of increasing its hold upon the laity, and that the time is surely at hand when religious marriage will be replaced by a more reasonable, civil relationship. To a woman who has never been taught to regard marriage as anything more than a publicly recognized partnership, capable of being dissolved by mutual consent, the temporary marriage of the Backwater is no evil. When the arrangement terminates she receives a present from her late lord in addition to the usual jewellery and other perquisites accumulated during her economical management of his house. So she is comfortably provided for. If she wishes to mate again with a man of her own race, she will have no lack of suitors. Should she have a child of the first marriage, she is so much the more desirable in the eyes of her countrymen. The social system of her native land secures her against the degradation which is inflicted on a European in similar circumstances by the prejudices fostered under a Christian regime.

The orthodox Christian creed and Christian

custom have an almost unlimited capacity for creating evil where none need exist. Social workers in London or any other large town in Europe bear testimony to the enormous number of girls whom one unpremeditated trivial act starts on a downward course, along which they are hurried by the weight of Christian intolerance. The example of noble women like George Eliot and Mary Wollstonecraft seems to have little effect as yet in opening the eyes of the bigoted.

Some years ago an English weekly paper threw open its columns to a discussion of this topic, and the correspondence took the turn one might naturally expect from the type of Englishman who rushes into print. "Paterfamilias," "Churchman" and others of their kind concerned themselves mainly with the demoralizing effect of *mésalliances* on young Englishmen, with unconscious wisdom leaving the woman out of the question. The Backwater was invited by the editor to take part in the discussion, but held scornfully aloof. The only correspondent who presented the question in a reasonable light was a level-headed English lady of admirable courage. She pointed out the terrible loneliness incidental to the work of a young Forest officer, for example, posted to an out-of-the-way

sub-division, and showed how the longing for companionship impelled men educated in a religious belief which assigns, in theory at any rate, supreme importance to chastity as the cardinal virtue, to seek distraction in alcohol. In the East drink means certain ruin. As between a mistress and the whisky bottle, the choice should be simplicity itself. The one is a natural companion, the other a highly artificial instrument of vice. Unfortunately the greatest of the Christian Churches condemns its priests to celibacy, but permits indulgence in wine. Both are unnatural practices, and only a warped intellect can regard one as a virtue and the other as neutral with a possible tendency to vice. The error in both its aspects can be traced to St. Paul, whose erroneous teaching was avoided by the sagacity of Mohammed.

To prevent misconception in connexion with what follows, let it be clearly stated that nothing here written is intended to derogate from the Christian ideal of masculine chastity. But only harm results from blinking facts in the customary British fashion. The facing of facts does not imply any acquiescence in the present state of things, or any lack of desire to remedy it. Quite the contrary. A clear view of the facts

must precede any successful attempt at reform. The most essential step is to place men and women on exactly the same social footing as regards chastity. Meanwhile it ought not to be impossible to show British boys, with their innate and carefully cultivated sense of fair play, that a sin involving such disproportionate penalties for the weaker and less guilty sinner is unsportsmanlike, cowardly and base.

It is ridiculous exaggeration to assert that a temporary marriage implies moral depravity on the part of the man. Plain speaking and common sense must be applied to the elucidation of this point. Modern conditions make early marriage impossible, except at the cost of economic ruin. What, moreover, would be thought by clear-sighted people of a man who, in order to avoid "sin," married an English girl and took her to spend the six months of a tropical rainy season in a leaky mat hut in the depths of a fever-stricken forest? In Ireland alone of Western countries the custom of early marriages prevails, "but these very marriages," says Lecky, "are the most conspicuous proofs of the national improvidence, and one of the most fatal obstacles to industrial prosperity." And poverty brings a crowd of vices in its train. For good

or evil Englishmen of the wealthier classes have abandoned early marriage, and the situation which arises must be faced. Chastity, says the social purist, is the solution of the problem. But masculine chastity is at present merely theoretical, and to many men in the Backwater the choice is between a marriage in accordance with native custom, and promiscuity. England adopts the latter practice, and the pious minority endeavour to shut their eyes to the facts. The Englishman in the tropics who conforms to native ideas of marriage, provided that in so doing he violates no principle which he sincerely holds—and this may be safely assumed—is morally no whit inferior to the man who marries for the reasons assigned in the Anglican Prayer Book, and far superior to the average of his unmarried countrymen, who nominally conform to the national idea of chastity and in practice observe the national custom of promiscuity.

An objection may be raised with reference to the provision made for the offspring of these temporary marriages. To this objection there are several answers. Births rarely result from these unions, for the native lady is at least as wise as her Western sister. If children are born, they receive exactly the same care, generally speaking,

as they would receive were their parents married according to Western and not according to Eastern custom. On the other hand, the casual union which well-meaning interference tends to substitute for the more permanent one does not obviate the risk of children born with very little chance of securing the attention which is their right.

The converse form of marriage between natives of India and European women is fortunately rare, but has unhappily shown a tendency to become more common of late years. Two causes are to be assigned: the ignorance prevailing amongst girls of the lower middle class in England as to the conditions of life in India and the social position of the Indian student, and the gradual removal of obstacles that once impeded the migration of Indian students to the English and Scotch Universities and the Inns of Court. The reason for this policy is to be sought in our smug insular belief in the superiority of British institutions and British methods of education for men of all nations and all colours. This curious belief is exemplified in the proposal to impose gradually upon India a system of representative government after the British model, an attempt which is as hopeless as trying to eat

the egg of the *mirghi* or Indian hen out of an English egg-cup. After three centuries in India Englishmen have not yet learned to import an egg-cup to fit the diminutive Indian egg. Herein the curious may trace an allegory.

The truth has been concealed from the British public by the utterances of men in high places, whose publicly expressed opinions flatter a popular delusion at the expense of truth. Thus, a Governor, fresh from a visit to a native state ruled by a young chief educated at Rugby, declared to a mixed audience at a school prize-giving that he had known many natives who had gone to England for their education, but none who were not the better for it. There were many amongst his audience as fully aware as the Governor himself that the main duty of the British Resident in that native state consisted in keeping within the limits assigned by the revenues the taste for gambling and drink acquired by the young chief during his residence in England.

The outburst of sedition which culminated in the murder of Sir Curzon Wylie aroused the India Office to a sense of the folly of importing students without restriction, and simultaneously with the formation of a club and the appointment of an adviser for these young men,



steps were taken to discourage their immigration.

To the shop girl and the lodging-house keeper's daughter every Indian student is a young prince. In point of fact, he is more often a man of low caste, the son of a wealthy trader, contractor or successful lawyer. Marriage with such men means to an Englishwoman the deepest misery. Cases are not unknown where a student has brought an English wife to India only to abandon her, and she has returned to her mother with an illegitimate child and the news that her husband was married before ever he left India. A most pathetic instance occurred some few years ago in which an Indian Civilian played an ignominious part. If he did not actually further the marriage he at least connived at it, and he was the only Englishman of those asked to subscribe money for the unhappy girl's return passage who had the heart to refuse. But cruel as such happenings are to those immediately concerned, they are productive of less harm in the aggregate than the low intrigues of Indian students in lodgings. These are injurious to British prestige in a degree grotesquely disproportionate to their real importance, for reasons connected with ineradicable instincts rooted in the deepest levels of human nature.

All questions connected with sexual morality, especially with mixed marriage, involve certain primitive passions of which stay-at-home Englishmen are apt to deny the existence, because they have not lived in surroundings in which these feelings could be aroused. There is, for instance, the dormant colour-instinct, which surely awakes when white men have to deal with dark races in the mass. An American of the Pacific Coast, where negroes are not very plentiful, but Chinamen swarm like ants, wonders why New Orleans rejects the negro and tolerates the heathen Chinese. New Orleans, on the other hand, cannot understand how San Francisco, which demands the exclusion of the Asiatic, can endure the evil-smelling nigger. New York is amazed at both, forgetting the truth of the Frenchman's proverb, "A little is a good thing, but too much is enough." So English opinion, outside the circle of those closely connected with India or South Africa, puts down race antipathy to mis-education, prejudice, arrogance, anything but its real cause. Men learn to suppress this antipathy in dealing with individuals, but no training will entirely eradicate so deeply rooted an instinct either from white, brown or black. Natives do not attempt to conceal their dislike

for Europeans when they can safely display it. Even the educated Englishman is inclined to lose control of his feelings when he discusses marriages or intrigues of black men with white women of any class. For these intrigues clash with another primitive instinct or barbarous custom, that the women of an alien race are the spoil of the conqueror. When men of a conquered race mate with women of the conquering race, the prestige of the latter is lowered as if by a defeat on the battlefield. The European feels himself humbled by such unions, and the other hugs the knowledge that he has put a subtle affront upon the European.

How, then, it will be asked, does the educated Englishman so far control his colour-instinct as to form more or less permanent unions with coloured women? And has the coloured woman no race antipathy for white men? To the first question the reply is simple. The colour instinct is overruled by a more imperious passion, and so far the white man's nature is degraded. In accordance with his custom he makes one law for himself, another for his women. "Men," he says, "are different." He means coarser, more selfish, more incontinent.

The answer to the second question is equally

humbling to the white man's pride. The coloured woman, unless she is abnormal and neurotic, merely sells herself to her European protector or husband. These unions are a grave reflection on the men of her own race, and their effect on the character of the race is most harmful. If the native is to be taught national self-respect, he must learn to reverence his women and guard them as jealously as do the Chinese. It needs no great skill in divination to predict that the Japanese, who sell their women for prostitution from Port Said to San Francisco, will ultimately go down before the Chinese.

It is not difficult to account for the unhappiness of a white woman married to an Indian. Unless she is sexually perverted, she has violated her own nature in marrying a man of coloured race. If her colour-instinct is dormant, only a very brief residence amongst natives is required to arouse it. She soon becomes aware of the difference between Europe and Asia concerning the esteem in which her sex is held. To a Mohammedan a woman is a soul-less animal, meant only for his pleasure and service. In the eyes of a Hindu she is worthless without a husband. A widow is an object of scorn, and the only act by which she can redeem herself in the

Britain governs India by right of conquest, though in the interests of India herself. The Englishman who uncovers and stands to attention when the National Anthem is played may be a Socialist or Republican. He is merely paying homage to the national greatness, in which he has his personal share, and of which the monarchy is the emblem and the King the representative. When the Briton thinks or speaks of our Indian Empire, he forms a mental image of himself as part owner of it and ruler of its countless millions, not as their equal. Less than any other territory in the Empire is this "brightest jewel in the British crown" to be regarded as an appanage of the monarchy. It was an acquisition made over to the Crown, as representing the nation, by a company of merchants. The term "British subject" applied to a Briton connotes something entirely different from its connotation when used of the native of India or Africa. Its application to British, Indian, and African alike neither establishes an equality nor constitutes a close bond between them. It is in no sense analogous to the title *Civis Romanus*, a title carrying definite political privileges and conferred for special services on individuals or communities. Much error has arisen from the belief

that such an analogy existed. It was left to a Socialist writer to point out that the American citizen is far more closely allied to the Briton than his fellow-subject the "Tamil-speaking, Tamil-thinking Dravidian."

Legal equality exists; social equality the Indian of the higher castes himself refuses; political equality, like everything else political, is rather a matter of expediency than principle. But it is impossible not to admit that the war of 1914 has had incalculable effects on this, as on most other questions which concern the British Empire.

## THE BACKWATER IN WAR

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE BACKWATER IN WAR

“I know as much of any will of God’s  
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,  
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows  
That plague him every way.”

—BROWNING.

“These wretched Colonies will all be independent in a few years and are a millstone round our necks.”

—DISRAELI.

“The alliance with France is the true basis of peace in Europe; for England and France will never unite in any European purpose which is radically unjust!”

—GLADSTONE.

THE announcement that the Great War was at last upon us produced a ripple of excitement even in the Backwater. Reuter cabled rumours of mighty battles in the North Sea and the sinking of huge battleships by the dozen, but the stories were promptly contradicted, and men settled down as they did at home to the daily perusal of accounts of the German inundation that steadily and rapidly covered Belgium and Northern France. The



heroic efforts of the British Army during the retreat from Mons, and the amazing valour of the Allies when they stemmed the German torrent at the Marne and rolled it back to the Aisne, restored the old comfortable belief that Britain was "safe to come out on top"; and as the impotence of the German Navy became evident, anxiety for those at home disappeared. The vastness of the struggle in which the Empire was engaged was only slowly revealed. But did England realize it more quickly? Exactly four months after the despatch of the British ultimatum to Germany Mr. Justice Scrutton remarked in open Court—

"It is a tempting matter for conjecture what a future historian of the British Empire will think when, years hence, he finds that on December 3, 1914, in the middle of the greatest war the world had ever seen, a Judge of the High Court, with the assistance of four counsel, was engaged for three hours in discussing whether a particular gentleman in the second or third round of a golf competition had the right of the choice of the course on which to play, or whether he had to toss for it."

A week before the terrible battle of Neuve Chapelle Lord Rosebery was pleading for the

army of parasites that make a living in connexion with horse-racing. It is difficult, therefore, severely to blame an out-of-the-way corner of the Empire for taking its golf, its racing, and its whisky-peg as usual.

The return of police officers and civilians recalled from leave and the hurried preparations for the despatch of troops to Europe produced a pleasing glow of excitement which recalled the days of the South African War, and deep satisfaction was derived from the arrest and deportation of our too successful German and Austrian rivals in business. The War Office accepted an offer of two hundred and fifty recruits for the New Army, and only five months after the outbreak of war a hundred of them embarked for England! A few of the more ardent spirits got leave from their *burra sahibs* and sailed at once. Some of them were fighting in France before the first Backwater contingent sailed. The local volunteer corps was swollen to enormous dimensions by the influx of all the able-bodied men of military age and some others, and rotund citizens whose exercise for ten years past had consisted in a daily walk up the office stairs and nine holes on the golf links on Sunday, followed by beer for

breakfast, were to be seen in khaki shirts and short pants shouldering a rifle on the maidan or trying to balance themselves in the prone position at the butts.

But the universal feeling was that matters had really gone too far when the *Emden* appeared on the scene, interfered with mails, sank our exports, and kept us in a fever of apprehension lest she should dare to challenge our forts. The Backwater became angry and clamoured for revenge. The Civilian, having ascertained that patriotism involved no loss of pay, volunteered for military duty in India, thus releasing military officers for active service. At the same time he arranged for a system of special allowances to secure himself against pecuniary detriment owing to the recall of men from leave and the consequent reversions and abolition of officiating pay. That was his interpretation of "Business as usual." The merchant followed the example of the Lancashire collier who, being told that his friend had been seen kissing his wife, replied "Drat his eyes! I'll sup his ale." In other words he set out to "collar the enemy's trade." To certain firms was attributed the intention of forming a ring to "bear" the prices of produce at the expense

of the native, but a shrewd and paternal Government, warned in good time, took measures to forestall and defeat the design. Merchants had a rude awakening, and incidentally a lesson in political economy, when they found that shipowners, alive to the opportunities afforded by the scarcity of tonnage owing to Government's action in commandeering ships, had sent freights towering to unheard-of heights, while the closing down of enemy concerns involved also the shutting of our chief markets. The lesson will prove salutary, no doubt. Had the war come to an abrupt end, as to the ignorant layman appeared possible during the early days of September, before a great national effort had been made, the greed and selfishness which has been the curse of our national life for so many years would merely have been intensified, and the compensations that now are dimly seen through the red mists of war could never have been realized.

How far the lesson was from being learned, even after five months of cruel and destructive warfare, may be seen from the tone of sober newspapers and reviews and the proceedings of grave societies like the Indian National Congress. Success in the war is identified by

a clever leader-writer with the "elimination of Germany and Austria from the markets of the world." The National Congress wastes time on the discussion of such grievances as the Arms Act and the proportion of Indian commissioned officers in Indian regiments. An intelligent reviewer, discussing Ernest Dimnet's book, *France Herself Again*, contemplates with alarm the possibility that "England in its present temper might, for the sake of a supposed gain in momentary efficiency, be prepared to make mincemeat of anything and everything constitutional and institutional, including Magna Charta itself." The strike on the Clyde, revealing the inability of the capitalist to divest himself of the habit of squeezing the last farthing of profit out of the purchaser, even when the purchaser is the Motherland and the Motherland in urgent need, together with the unwillingness of the workman to waive the rules of his union or deny his craving for beer, may have reassured the critic as to the persistent character of British conservatism.

As the pace of a squadron is the pace of the slowest ship, and the progress of a class is limited by the capacity of the dullest pupil, so the lesson of the war will not be driven home

until the average man has learned love of country and unlearned love of self. Is there not ground for hope that the British Empire will by this war make a real advance towards the attainment of national unity? She has seen politicians who, a few months ago, were defending themselves with imperfect success against sordid charges, develop almost miraculously into true statesmen. She has heard the publican, representing the once omnipotent "Trade," in council assembled raise his voice in protest against the infringement of his right to debauch her fighting men, and she has ignored him. Why should she not see at last a final peace between capital and labour and the destruction of the tyranny of the public-house? She had become inured to her plagues and accepted them as irremediable. Taught by war and confident in her new-found strength, she may dare at length to challenge the old beliefs in the inevitable nature of many inveterate evils, to follow the advice of Paracelsus and "Boldly deny," risking "the thunderbolt that does not come."

It is customary for Anglo-Indians and Colonials to lament the provincialism of the stay-at-home Briton, his incapacity for "thinking

imperially," his fondness for football matches and race-meetings, and his numerous other limitations. The war that is changing the whole world has changed that too. The few who were privileged to be in England during the months of August and September, 1914, found it difficult to convey to the rest of the inhabitants of the Backwater the revolution in English feeling, or to make them understand that at last London and the commercial North had adopted the habit of thinking in terms of world-policy and left the Anglo-Indian far behind. These latter pointed to the continuance of professional football and horse-racing, forgetting the insuperable dislike of the Briton for interference with the freedom of individuals, however selfish and unpatriotic they may be. Were not even Keir Hardie and Ramsay Macdonald tolerated, and was conscription not avoided in the face of tremendous temptation? The stay-at-home Briton is endeavouring to solve the problems of universal and lasting peace, the settlement of the Balkan peoples and oppressed Poland, and the elimination of the Turk. He is no longer greatly concerned with the acquisition of Delagoa Bay and the shores of Lake Tanganyika.

A scarcely less pressing problem which England has determined to face is the relations of India to the Empire. That question entered upon an entirely new phase when Indian troops were allowed to fight side by side with the finest European troops ever put into the field, and against the most powerful and most perfectly equipped war-machine ever designed. The Indian soldier claimed as a privilege what some few Englishmen were slow to admit as a duty, the right to fight for the Empire. His claim has been admitted, and that claim carries with it the most tremendous implications. One of the grounds of complaint against President Kruger was his treatment of British Indians in the Transvaal, but Indian troops were not allowed to fight against the Boers because that was a "White Man's War," and the Government feared the possibility of rousing native feeling in South Africa. The colour bar lost not of its force after the war, as the triangular negotiations between the Governments of India, England and Natal on the position of Indians in the Colony clearly showed. Canada, most loyal of the Sister Nations over-seas, followed the example of South Africa. The consequence was a riot in Calcutta caused by the return of



disaffected Sikhs from Vancouver after the war broke out, and the death of a British police officer amongst others shot in the struggle. It is difficult to picture a more dramatically ironic contrast than this. While Indian troops were dying on the fields of France for the British Empire, their countrymen and co-religionists, expelled from a British Colony of unsurpassed patriotism with murder in their hearts, were avenging on British officers the treatment they had endured at the hands of a Colonial administration.

Not as mercenaries but as citizens of the Empire did the Indian troops face an enemy who before the war had enjoyed greater privileges than they in any self-governing colony. Can India, then, be refused representation on any Imperial Council hereafter? Indian blood has been poured out in defence of British liberties. It is impossible longer to argue that India is not fit to take her place side by side with the self-governing states of the Empire. That argument admits of a crushing retort in the shape of a demand for self-government to qualify India for admission to the Imperial Council. What form the solution of the problem will assume would baffle the shrewdest states-

man to predict. But two conclusions emerge most clearly: first, that some basis of reconciliation must be found between the claims of India and the interests and prejudices of Canada, South Africa and Australia; second, that the training of India in self-government must be enormously accelerated.

The Eurasian problem, on which the conditions produced by the war might have been expected to throw some light, remains unluckily still obscure. The Eurasian is the backbone of the volunteers in India, and as a volunteer he has rendered useful service. The Local Government of the Backwater, after suppressing by rapid and decisive measures incipient mutiny in a native regiment largely recruited from turbulent frontier tribes, and after dispatching a regiment of Territorials to suppress a disturbance in another part of the Empire, entrusted the defence of the capital largely to the volunteers, who had taken a chief part in the disarmament and arrest of the disaffected troops. When men were invited to offer themselves for service in Kitchener's Army or with the Indian Army Reserve of officers, individual Eurasians responded to the call. Many were accepted, but many were rejected apparently

for no better reason than the one assigned in the doggerel rhyme about Doctor Fell. The Anglo-Indian Association missed an opportunity which may never recur. The Englishman formed his Pals' Battalions, his Public Schools Corps, and local regiments by the score for the New Army. Could not the Anglo-Indian, as he styles himself, have raised one battalion for service at the front and settled for ever his claim to an equality with his father's people? Did he shrink from the test? However that may be, his neglect to avail himself of a unique chance must count against him. Indians of every race offered themselves, but the Eurasians as a class remained silent and left it to individuals to defend their honour.

The crucial experiment of a Eurasian regiment was worth trying. The ill-odour of the name might have been removed for ever. It is worth recalling that, writing in 1865 on the Mutiny, Sir George Trevelyan, in his book *Cawnpore*, used the scornful phrase "half-castes, or, as they would fain be called, Eurasians." Whose fault is it that in less than fifty years the name which the people of mixed blood themselves chose has been degraded into a contemptuous title? How much better would

it have been if they had seized the chance to rehabilitate the appellation of their own choice, instead of appropriating a style that belongs to somebody else, and in many cases cannot by any stretch of meaning be made to fit them. Masquerade costume harmonizes ill with broad daylight and the world of affairs. Those who appreciate the virtues of the Eurasian and see his possibilities can only regard with infinite regret his corporate inaction at the end of the critical year 1914.